

Peter chapter four. First Peter chapter four, we'll be looking at verses 17 through 19. First Peter chapter four, verses 17 through 19. It occurred to me just a moment ago, I remembered a dream I had last night. And in this dream, I was talking to somebody and I was telling them there are maybe 10 churches in the whole country as good as Second Presbyterian Church. I'm not sure that's true, that there are as many as 10, may only be One or two, but I'm just thankful that we are together and that by God's grace, this really is a special place and it is certainly all a result of his mercy. We would, I hope, be the first to acknowledge that we are nothing apart from Christ.

But last week, as we were looking at the previous portion of 1 Peter chapter 4, we were commanded to glorify God in our suffering. And we were commanded to glorify God in our suffering because in our suffering, God is refining us from our sins. He's reforming us to his own image. And he's also remaining with us in our suffering, refining us, reforming us, and remaining with us. And today we will see that in whatever suffering you go through in life, you, if you're a Christian, have all that you need.

Because as a Christian, you have the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And with this in mind, let us pray and ask God now to bless the reading and preaching of his word. Oh God, we simply remember those words of Jesus Christ when he said, apart from me, you can do nothing. And oh God, apart from your working this morning, through the reading and preaching of the word, nothing, nothing of eternal value, no sanctification, no salvation will transpire but with you. all things are possible. In Christ's name we pray, amen. 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 17 through 19. Hear now the word of God.

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. Amen. And thus ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless now the proclamation of it to our lives.

Well, imagine with me this morning, if you will, this scene. You are on a sturdy ship and you're traveling through treacherous waters. All around you, the boat is being smashed by large waves. But because you are in this sturdy ship, though the storm rages around you, you are certain though it may be with difficulty, that you will indeed get through this storm. But also imagine that around this ship, in the same ocean, in the same treacherous storm, there are people in the water.

And these people don't have any flotation devices. These people in the ocean without any flotation device in the midst of this storm are not facing a difficulty, they are facing an impossibility. They will certainly perish. There is no way they will escape this storm.

Well, beloved, suffering and God's judgment are something like this storm. And that ship, in the analogy, is something like the gospel. We might call that boat the gospel. And if you're not on that boat, as you face God's judgment and as you go through suffering, you will surely perish. It is an impossibility that anything other than perishing will be your lot. However, if you are on the gospel boat, you will certainly make it through the storms of God's judgment and the storms of life's sufferings, though it be with difficulty.

And so this morning, I want us to consider this from our text. Going through life with the gospel. Going through life with the gospel. And we're gonna have two points. Going through life with the gospel, first, is difficult, but not impossible. Going through life with the gospel is difficult, but not impossible, and second, going through life with the gospel requires perseverance. So first this morning, going through life with the gospel is difficult, but not impossible.

We see this in verses 17 and 18. Look again at verse 17. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? Peter is comparing God's judgment on believers and unbelievers in this verse. And he's essentially saying this.

If the judgments of God are as hard as they are on the believer, how in the world do you think they are for the unbeliever? If they're this difficult for those who are in Christ, how difficult must the judgments of God and the sufferings of life be on those who do not know Christ and who obey not the gospel? It's hard enough for you, isn't it? How hard must the sufferings and judgments of God be upon those who don't know Christ and the God of Holy Scripture? So he says at the end of verse 17, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And do you know what the outcome will be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? What will be their outcome?

Well, Paul, using nearly the exact same language in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 tells you what their outcome will be. He says there, 2 Thessalonians 1, he says, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might. Paul says, those who do not obey the gospel of God suffer an eternal punishment. they suffer a Christless eternity underneath the unmitigated wrath of God forever and ever and ever. When those who do not obey the gospel have been in the unquenchable flames of fire for 10,000 years, they will be no closer to dying, and they will be no closer to extinguishing the flames. It will be an eternal, Christless eternity underneath God's wrath.

But what does it mean to obey this gospel? Well, it means simply to repent of your sins and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. That is what it means to obey the gospel. To obey the gospel isn't to work yourself into glory. It's not to earn for yourself salvation. It's to repent of your sins and look to the one who has done it for you. It's to look away from yourself unto Christ. It's to delight in Christ alone for your salvation. It is to simply say, I can't, and he has done it all. It's to look away from the self unto Christ alone for your salvation. And so I ask you here this morning, do you know this Christ? Have you received the free offer of the gospel in Christ Jesus? Have you simply rested upon him alone for your salvation?

Now I once heard a story and it's a true story of a man who was driving towards a bridge and as he was getting closer to this bridge he saw on the side of the road another man with his shirt off waving it around fanatically and trying to get everyone to stop who was coming towards this bridge and so this one gentleman pulled over and realized the reason that this man had been so insistent that everyone stop was because the bridge up ahead was down. And anyone who did not stop, and as I recall, some did not, but I don't, I didn't revisit the actual true story, but anyone who did not stop was going to plunge to their death.

What I'm trying to tell you here this morning from this verse is that if you don't know Christ, the bridge is out and you are headed to your own destruction and it will be a Christless eternity. Every other way of life, the bridge is out. If you're seeking life anywhere other than Christ, the bridge is out. And at the same time, I am telling you that there is a bridge that is not out. That bridge is Christ.

And you need to follow him. You need to go the way of the gospel. Is life difficult if you believe in the gospel? Yes, it's incredibly difficult. If you believe in the gospel. But what Peter is saying is it's not impossible in every other way is impossible. And why does Peter bring this up right here in this letter?

Because you will remember that these are suffering Christians, and he wants these suffering Christians to understand that though it is exceedingly difficult what they are going through, it is not impossible that they will get through it. And it is not impossible that they will get through it because Christ is their Lord and Savior. It is inevitable that though it be difficult, they will get through it because Christ indeed is their Lord and Savior. They are on that gospel boat, so to speak, from the start of the sermon.

And that's why he goes on in verse 18 to drill down this same point by quoting from Proverbs 11:31. Look at verse 18 there. He's drilling home this same point of the impossibility of every other way and the certainty of the only way, which is Christ and the gospel. Look at verse 18 again.

And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? Now what is meant by this phrase, and if the righteous is scarcely saved? Is Peter trying to stir up doubt in the salvation of his readers? Is he trying to encourage them to doubt that they are among God's elect? Even though back in chapter one, in the first couple of verses, he called them elect exiles. Well, that is not what Peter is doing here.

This word scarcely really simply means difficult. It doesn't mean that there is any uncertainty in their salvation. It simply means that the way of salvation, walking with Christ throughout this life is one of difficulty. In the NASB, it is translated as follows. And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

And if you turn over to Acts chapter 27, we see a couple of examples of this same word. In Acts chapter 27, we see this same word translated scarcely, and we see it used three times. Acts chapter 27, look at verses seven and eight, and then we'll look at verse 16. Acts chapter 27, verses seven and eight, and then verse 16, each time in the ESV here, it will be translated difficulty. And it's the same word from our passage in 1 Peter. Acts chapter 27, verses seven and eight.

We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Kindis. And as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmon. Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of La Silla. And look over at verse 16. Running under the lee of a small island called Cotta, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat.

What you'll notice in all three of those instances of this word is that every single one of them expressed difficulty, but also final success. In every single one of those physical experiences, it was challenging. But in every single one of those experiences, they did eventually get to where they were trying to go.

And so what Peter is doing here is he's saying your life in Christ will be difficult, but you will arrive at your final destination. You will end up in glory with Christ if you are on this ship, this boat of the gospel, even amid the storms of your life. Now, what comfort can you hear as a believer take from this reality that it's difficult? Well, have you ever been going through your Christian life and you're thinking to yourself, this is really difficult. And then you're thinking to yourself, everyone else seems to be doing just fine. Maybe there's something wrong with me. Well, Peter, the apostle says, welcome to the team. Peter says, It's difficult.

Do not be surprised that your walk with Christ is difficult. Perhaps there ought to be more concern if there is no difficulty in your walk with Christ. Not to suggest that you should be living in a constant state of misery, but there should be a sense in which you're experiencing the battles of following Christ. It is difficult to walk the way of the gospel.

But though it be difficult, Peter is saying it's not impossible. As the hymn writer put it, through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come. 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home. So take comfort in your difficulties. You're not alone.

But secondly, let us see this morning, going through life with the gospel requires perseverance. And this is verse 19. Going through life with the gospel requires perseverance. We read in verse 19, therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. Peter begins verse 19 with this little word, therefore, and he's saying, since you have this gospel, therefore, since you have this gospel, you ought to suffer continually entrusting yourself to your faithful creator.

Since you have this good gospel, you ought to, in your suffering, continue to entrust yourself to your creator while doing good. This is going to require perseverance. You continually suffer, but you continually entrust yourself to your faithful creator while doing good. These things happen simultaneously, the suffering and the entrusting, the suffering and the doing good.

These things are happening at the same time in the life of the Christian. And he says, this is according to God's will. Your suffering is not random. Here is the reality. When it comes to your life, when especially when it comes to your suffering, you have these two options. Either this is God's will or it isn't God's will. If it isn't God's will, then your suffering is pointless and everything is meaningless. If it is God's will, And then your suffering has purpose. And it does have meaning, even if you don't understand it.

But those are really the two options set before every single person walking the globe. My suffering's random and meaningless, or it's purposeful and I don't understand it. Well, Peter says it's God's will. It's the latter. There's purpose and meaning, even if we do not always understand it.

And as you're suffering, you're entrusting yourself to your faithful creator. And this is active. You're actively entrusting yourself to your faithful creator. You're not just passively sitting back, taking one more blow after another blow after another blow in your suffering passively. No, you are actively making an effort in Christ Jesus by the power of the spirit to trust your faithful creator as you go through your sufferings.

And this word in trust means giving something to someone for safekeeping. You're giving something to someone for safekeeping. And who is the one to whom you are giving this something? It is your faithful creator. And what are you giving him according to the verse?

Your soul. God is keeping your soul. You entrust yourself to him through your sufferings. This is what enables you to say with the hymn writer, when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul. You can say that because you're entrusting yourself to your faithful creator through your sufferings. Do you remember Jesus' final words on the cross? He said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. That word commit is our word in trust. He was entrusting his spirit to his heavenly father for safekeeping.

That means that when you go through sufferings, 1 Peter 4.19, using that same word, entrust or commit, he is saying you get to model your suffering after Christ's suffering. You actually get to, and this really is an unspeakable honor when you reflect on it, you get to try, by God's grace at work in your life, you actually get to try to emulate Christ in your suffering. Just like he entrusted himself to his heavenly father, so too do you.

That's an honor. That's an honor. If you don't know Christ, That doesn't make any sense to you. But if you know Christ, you say, I get to follow him even in my suffering? That's a very high privilege that I, by God's grace, get to make that effort. But somebody here probably this morning noticed, and maybe thought to themselves, why does it say creator?

I wondered that. Why not? This word is used one time in the New Testament right here. It's not like this always calling. Now it's always implied in the New Testament that God is their creator. We could turn to a million passages for that. But the actual word exactly here. So you have to ask why in the world did he choose to use this word here in this context. And you know what I found when I read the commentaries? Nobody really said very much about it. So this is what I hope is a really good effort to explain it. It's my best effort as I wrestled with it.

What does the title of creator bring to your mind? What does it highlight? It highlights his omnipotence, doesn't it? It highlights that he's all powerful, doesn't it? When you think of him as your father, you think of him in his tender mercy towards you and praise the Lord for his tender mercy for you.

But what comes to mind when you think of the creator, the one who made all things out of nothing? I think you should think of power. And so here he's saying you're suffering and he's saying you can entrust yourself to the one who created everything. You who know Jesus can entrust yourself to the omnipotent, infinitely powerful one, even in your suffering.

He can uphold you. He can keep you. He created. And he's not just a creator. He's a faithful creator. You can trust this creator. He didn't just make you. He is faithful to you. And so here he's saying in your suffering, you're going through the trials of life. And he says, you have an all powerful, all trustworthy, one to whom you look in Christ. He's your creator. Go to him. Because you're going to need to persevere and it's going to be hard. Go to the one who created you and who is faithful to you. Go to God Almighty, the maker of the heavens and the earth. And this, as you persevere, will grant you grace to keep trying. to do good. He says, doing good. You're going to keep making that effort to do good because God, your creator, has a hold of you in the midst of your sufferings.

What are some applications of this for us here this morning? Well, it means you can ask yourself, how can I persevere to do good when I'm suffering in my marriage? How can I persevere to do good when I'm struggling as a parent? How, children, can you in the room, little ones, try to keep doing good, persevere and do good towards your mom or your dad or your brothers or your sisters or your friends, even when you don't want to?

You keep entrusting yourself to your faithful creator. He has the power. He is faithful. You keep asking him and going to him for his help, and then you really do make an effort to do good in the lives of those around you and in your own relationship with the Lord.

Well, today, in closing, we have seen this. We have seen that going through life with the gospel is difficult. It is difficult, but it's not impossible. We've also seen that going through life with the gospel requires perseverance. So here this morning, press on, beloved. Press on this pathway of life with the gospel, even when it is difficult. Press on in this path of walking a life of the gospel, because your faithful creator will not let you go.

Let us pray. Almighty God, we praise you and thank you that we who know trials and dangers and toils and snares have been brought thus far by the grace which you have granted us in Christ. And we will surely make it by that same grace which will keep us forever and ever in Jesus. To you be the glory, in Christ's name, amen.