

Suffering for the Sake of the Gospel: 1 Peter 3:8-22 and 1 Peter 4:12-19.

Central Reason for Writing:

- Insulted, Mistreated, Ostracized
- “Jesus is Lord” led to Social Persecution (or formal)

Peter understands the pressure, and as a shepherd he wants to protect the flock.

- Relevant life experience of **denying Jesus** (Luke 22:54-62)
- **Wept** bitterly—he knew the pain of denying Jesus.
- **Restored**—but not everyone will come back after walking away.
- “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” (Benjamin Franklin)

Read: 1 Peter 3:8-17

Opening Lines: Be Like Jesus

- What would Jesus Do?

In Contact of Family Codes: (slaves, wives, husbands)

- “Finally” in v. 8 tells us this statement is a summary of everything he had just said.
- Heart, Actions, and Attitude of Jesus.

Verses 9-10: What to do when we’re persecuted.

- There were times of all-out persecution, but this situation is different.
- Social pressure to walk away from Christianity:
 - **Evil** actions & **Insults** directed towards Christians (3:9)
 - **Harm** for doing good 3:13
 - **Suffering**—3:14 used frequently in the two passages we’ll read tonight.
 - **“Threats”** 3:14
 - Questions or **Interrogations** about their Faith in Jesus 3:15
 - Speaking **Maliciously** / **Slandering** Christians 3:16
 - **Fiery Ordeal** 4:12

In the World but not of the World

- Indistinguishable in some ways, incompatible in others.
- Peter in **Acts 5:29**, “We must obey God rather than human beings!”
- The incompatibility was the basis for their persecution—seen as a threat.

Reframing “Outsider Status” As a Positive Thing

- Peter wants us to embrace our identity as outsiders as a positive thing.
- Persecution is a problem, but the bigger problem is **conforming**.
- **Mark 8:36**, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

Christianity as a Minority Religion

- Peter doesn't see Christianity becoming dominant or preferred.
- Not how to end persecution, but how to endure it for the sake of the Gospel?

Key Teachings: Responding to Persecution

- v. 9—Evil / Insults, respond with blessings (**eulogies**)
 - Human Instinct: Fight fire with fire, but God is calling us to take the high road.
- v. 10— Keep our tongues from evil and our lips away from deceitful speech.
 - We need to hold fast to the foundation of truth even when others abandon it.
- v. 11—Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.
- v. 14—Play on words:
 - Don't be **afraid** when people threaten us (phobia).
 - Threats = also phobia.
- v. 15—Instead of repaying evil with evil, or insults with insults, or fighting back... honor Christ as Lord.
 - Keep revering him as Lord—don't give in to the pressure.
 - Submit to his teachings and follow his example.
 - Don't withdraw and condemn
 - But be willing to have conversations about your faith—gentleness and respect (phobos)

Difficult Teaching, Anchored in God & Jesus

1. God — In v. 12, (Psalm 34)

- “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”
- God is paying very close attention to our attitude and our conduct.

2. Jesus — Peter makes a connection to the life of Jesus:

- “18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit... 22 [Christ] has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”
- Jesus' decision to endure the suffering of the cross led to the **greatest blessing**.

We Can Accomplish Something Similar.

- Our patient endurance can help people come into the presence of God.
- Not brute force or new laws, but quiet humility and selfless sacrifice.

Read: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Some Christians Surprised

- Reshape their expectations = *Of Course you're going to be persecuted!*
- We are foreigners and exiles, so it makes sense we'd be treated as outsiders.
- Even Jesus was rejected and condemned.

A New Perspective on Suffering

- God abandoned us, doesn't care, isn't strong enough?
- We should consider suffering for the Gospel as a badge of honor.
 - Shared intimacy with Jesus = koinonia.
 - Traumatic experiences create a special bond.
- No one enjoys suffering, but God can use it to create a stronger connection in our relationship.

4:14—Those Who Suffer Are Blessed

- **Jesus' beatitudes** in Matthew 5—Poor in Spirit, Mourn, Peacemakers, etc.
- Matthew 5:11-12, *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*
- Suffering for Christ = intimacy with God, blessed and favored.

Knowing the Good that Comes from Suffering... Do the unexpected: Rejoice.

- "I Will Praise You In the Storm."
- 1 Peter 4:16 is the reason we're calling it that: "However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but **praise God** that you bear that name."
 - Consistent theme in the Bible.
 - Hard times help shape us and form us and prepare us to be stronger Christians

In **Romans 5:3-5**, Paul says "3 Not only so, but we[c] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

In **James 1:2-4** it says "2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

- For Peter, this isn't just **theory** and ideas.
- It's real life and something he's **personally experienced**.
- When Peter was **persecuted, beaten** and **thrown in jail** because of his faith, listen to the way that he responded in **Acts 5:41**, "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."

CONCLUSION

Following Jesus is the **best choice** a person could make, but it's not the **easiest**, and we shouldn't be surprised if our decision to follow Jesus as Lord costs us something.

The question Peter has for us is, **are we willing to Praise God in the storm?**