



1 Peter 4:12-19
Life's Hard, Do Good

Summary: When trials come your way don't think it's strange or be ashamed, commit your soul to God, rejoice and keep doing good.

I want to start this morning by asking you a question: is it normal for Christians to have a difficult life? What do you think? Should life be hard, or easy? What's the right mix? How much frustration and opposition or even hostility should you expect to endure in life? What is normal?

As we turn to Scripture this morning we find that the answer is: life will be hard. For all kinds of reasons – being a Christian doesn't protect you from COVID or government restrictions, being a Christian doesn't keep your plumbing from getting clogged, or your phone from dying and losing all the pictures from your vacation – I can tell you this from experience unfortunately. These are the just the trials of life, the difficulties that come upon us all.

And, sometimes you make bad choices, do bad things, and bad things happen back to you in response. You break a rule or commit a crime and you're punished. You don't do the work or study hard enough and you fail. You don't treat people right and they lash out back at you. Being a Christian doesn't protect you from any of that. Those are the consequences of life, and they make things hard, uncomfortable, and inconvenient. They're common to all people but you could have prevented them.

But there's an additional category of difficulty experienced by Christians and that is the difficulty, the trials, and the opposition you experience as you try to follow Christ in a world that is walking away from Him. You don't have to seek it out, but sooner or later this conflict will find you because you're going against the flow. What do we think about that? What do we do about it? How do we respond?

Well, Peter gives us four things to think about this morning. I summarize it like this: When trials come your way don't think it's strange or be ashamed, commit your soul to God, rejoice and keep doing good. Read with me:

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; **13** but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. **14** If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. **15** But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. **16** Yet

if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now

*“If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”*

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Now, I have to keep reminding us of the context here. Peter is writing to Christians in the early church who have been living through an especially difficult time. He said back in Chapter One verse six, they have been *grieved by various trials*. And later on in chapters two and three we learn that some of that difficulty was coming from the government, some of it was coming at work, some of it was coming in their relationships at home – all the same places that you might feel difficulty coming from today – as a citizen, an employee, and in your relationships.

But, Peter says, don't think that's strange. Don't be surprised. Don't be astonished. Understand it, expect it and you'll be better able to deal with it. He knows you handle things better when you go in with your eyes wide open. So, as a good pastor, he's trying to set these people up with the right expectations.

Think of being on an airplane when the pilot comes on the intercom and says she's going to go ahead and turn on the fasten seat belts sign because there's going to be some turbulence up ahead.

Well, most people don't like turbulence, but it's better to know it's coming, now you're waiting for it, instead of just suddenly bouncing around and wondering, what's that? Peter says, 'Hey, there's going to be some turbulence on this flight – when you get bumped around, don't think it's odd.' Don't think it's strange. Don't think there's something wrong with the pilot or the plane. It's all going to be OK – you will still make it to your final destination, and once you're there, then you can relax and chill out. But don't expect your seat in coach to be like a seat by the pool – you're not there yet; you're headed there and there will be some bumps during the ride.

Christian, there are things God wants you to know. He wants to help set your expectations so you're not surprised, you don't think it's strange. And one of things He wants you to expect is for life to be challenging. In fact, we're told throughout Scripture that Christians will face difficult times.

The apostle Paul said that he sent Timothy to visit the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 3:2 to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, 3 that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

Paul reminds them, you *know* there will be times when life is hard. So, when it happens, when you feel opposed or alone or at risk, don't be surprised. Remember, you were appointed to this, don't be shaken up, be established and encouraged in the faith. Rely on God and each other to come through it, but don't expect life to make it through life without conflict or pain.

He tells the church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

Now, I love this verse and I highly, highly, recommend that you mark it and memorize it because this is a fighter verse – this is a weapon of spiritual warfare. There is truth in this verse that will change your life, because there is a promise here that you can overcome the sin that is controlling your life – by clinging to God's promise. He wants you to know – yes you are tempted, don't think that's strange – you're just like everyone else.

And you say no I'm not. No one else struggles like me, no one else has it as bad me, no one else knows what I'm going through, and God says, no – you're just like everyone else. They're fighting and I want you to fight too. Others have won and you can win too. You're not the only one. And, God promises, you'll never face something you can't conquer by His grace and with His help.

And again you say, that's not true. You don't know how hard I try, you don't know how strong the temptation is, how automatic my response is, how long I've been dealing with this or how much I've done. And God says, I don't let anything come your way that would overwhelm you. There is always a way of escape or endurance that you may bear it. It may be a fight, but God says there's an escape. You can change, you're not stuck.

But here's what else you need to know – in Greek, the word for **temptation** in 1 Corinthians is the same word as **test** or **try** back in 1 Peter 4. There Peter talks about **fiery trials which test you**, here Paul talks about **temptations that overtake you** – grammatically they're talking about the same thing – all the different ways people, events, and things, even Satan himself try to bump you off course from following Jesus.

God wants you to know these things. He's warning you ahead of time – there's turbulence up ahead. Don't think it's strange, don't be surprised. Keep your eyes on Christ.

And listen to Christ, who warned the disciples, when you follow Me it will lead you into conflict with other people. He told them:

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Jesus told them once, and now He tells them again – remember these things. If people don't like Me, they're not going to like you either. Remember this. Don't think it's strange, don't be surprised – you're not going the same direction as everyone else in life, and when you walk against the flow of the crowd you tend to get jostled around a bit. That's to be expected when you follow Jesus.

Well, now that you know all of this, what are you supposed to do? How should this knowledge affect your life? What do you do instead?

Peter says, **rejoice**.

1 Peter 4:13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

God wants us to know that life is hard, full of disappointments and struggles, even conflict and active resistance, but it's OK. You can willfully, consciously, defiantly rejoice in the face of it all *because* you know you're walking the same path as Jesus, and **when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy**.

Friends, it is possible to sing in the sorrows. To rejoice in your trials. To experience a peace that passes all understanding, even when life hurts most. Scripture says it and history proves it. Ask any mature Christian and they will be able to tell you of the strength, comfort, courage, and peace they found by pressing into God during a season of sorrows and pain.

It's possible, it's to be desired. But how do we usually respond instead? How do you normally react to challenges and opposition in life? Well, think about yourself over the past 18 months. What emotions and reactions have you had? Anyone complain about what was happening? Anyone get angry about what was happening? Call someone else names? Call them stupid? Get fired up because people were or were not doing things your way?

Or, instead of lashing out, did you withdraw and retreat into your shell? Disengage? Wrestle with fear, anxiety, doubt, and self-pity?

Peter says if you go through difficulties with Jesus and especially when you go through difficulties *for Jesus*, you can rejoice – right there, in the sorrow and the pain, and when His glory is revealed, you will be glad with exceeding joy. The cross is the way to the crown and Jesus invites us to both – to experience the difficulties of this life and the glories of life everlasting by identifying with, becoming united with, Him.

Romans 8:17 says we are ... **heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together**.

Again, in Philippians Paul brings these things together – suffering on earth but eternal union with Christ. He writes of his desire in

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Paul says I want to be like Christ, conformed to His image. That may mean suffering now, it may mean being an outcast now, but it also means glory forever through the power of the resurrection.

And yet, it's not all just promises for later. Suffering for Christ also has a promise here and now. Notice what Scripture says:

1 Peter 4:14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

This is very, very, important for you to know, especially if you're in a situation where your friends, family, or others in your life are making it hard for you to follow Jesus. If anyone is looking down on you for following Jesus, for worshiping Jesus, for being here right now instead of out doing something else on a beautiful Sunday morning. If someone mocks you, makes fun of you, or gives you a hard time for your relationship with Jesus, read this verse again:

1 Peter 4:14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Do you think that's true? God says it is. Do you think it makes a difference? Of course, it does. David said, even when **I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for You are with me.**

In the Old Testament, the glory of God was known as the Shekinah, a visible glowing cloud that masked the presence of God from His people because He's too pure and holy for anyone to see directly.

So, the people saw the Shekinah glory leading them through the desert during the Exodus from Egypt. And they saw the glory rest on Mount Sinai when Moses went up to meet with God and receive the law. Later when the tabernacle was built and dedicated as a place for worship, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Later, when the Temple was built in Jerusalem, God's glory filled that place as well (1 Kings 8).

Now, God's glory rests upon you and is in you, if you are in Christ. That should make a difference in your life if you really understand and believe it.

Christian, you will go through difficulty in life. But when you do, God is with you. And especially if that difficulty comes from trying to follow Him, you are not alone, you are blessed. So,

1 Peter 4:15 ... let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Christian, you have nothing to be ashamed of when you stand before God, so why be ashamed when you stand before men? Do you respect, or fear, or value the opinions of men and women, of people in your class or online or at work, more than you fear God?

It's easy to do. It's easy to let your friends, family, and neighbors tell you what's cool and what's not, what's acceptable and what's not, what you should and should not be doing, buying, wearing, watching, listening to, eating, drinking, smoking or thinking.

It's really, *really* easy to be influenced by all the people around you and be judged by God. Or you could be influenced by God and judged by people. You make the call. But be aware of this:

17 For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now

*"If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*

We all face a judgment day for our time on this earth. But God has made a way for us to escape it through Christ. He was a willing sacrifice for us, the perfect intersection of justice and mercy. We are never saved on our own merit, or through our own accomplishments, we're never accepted by God because we've finally done enough or achieved enough, we are only received by grace, through faith, in Christ.

But if you don't have that – if you haven't confessed your sins and your need for a savior, how will you escape the judgment of God? What will happen to the ungodly and sinner? The people you so desperately want to like you, get along with you, the people you want to include you or the people you want to leave you alone, what will happen to them in eternity? They will face the judgment.

The judgment Christ has saved you from, and now He wants to use you to make a difference in their lives, for His sake. So Christian, when trials come your way don't think it's strange or be ashamed, commit your soul to God, rejoice and keep doing good. Look at

1 Peter 4:19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

In this one verse we have a tight summary of the message of the entire book. Life is hard, do good anyway. Now, of course, you need to unpack that in all kinds of ways, but it's a good summary – life is hard, disappointing, challenging, full of frustrations and conflict, how could it be any other way if God is leading in one direction and people are resisting, ignoring, or defying Him? And how could there not be conflict as a result? How could two groups moving in opposite directions in the same space not experience collisions?

And yet your challenge, and my challenge, is this: to commit our souls to God, *under these circumstances*, while we suffer, when life is hard, when there is opposition, when you are persecuted, mocked, trapped, when you are suffering, grieved by various trials, right then, right there, commit your soul to God and do good.

Practice what we called derivative submission fueled by defiant faith – endure the challenges of this world because you wholly trust in God.

So let me point out something important – did you notice Peter says [commit your soul to God as to a faithful Creator](#)? Does that strike you as strange? Why not call Him a Merciful Father or a Great Savior, why [a faithful Creator](#)? This is one of only two times in the entire New Testament when God is referred to as [Creator](#).

Peter is writing to people who feel small in the world. They are not in power politically, or in the workplace, they're not in power in the home. He's writing to a group that includes the marginal, the weak, the abused, and he reminds them that they serve a God of ultimate authority – the God who made the world and everything in it, who spoke the world into existence. And that God is with them, in them, among them, the Spirit of that God is [upon them even as they suffer](#). He has power and He is faithful. They are not forgotten.

So, knowing all of this, what should they do? [Commit their souls to doing good](#) - no matter the opposition, no matter the outcome. Do good in life, and keep doing good, even when life is hard. God is with you, His Spirit is upon you, let Him use you to do good.

We're going to celebrate communion now. It's a good time for you to take a minute and work some things out with God. Maybe you need to talk with Him about the way you've been handling the trials and tests of your life. Maybe you need to ask for forgiveness, maybe you need to ask for help. Last week we said prayer is not the spiritual equivalent of buying stuff on Amazon, you don't put in your order and expect God to drop off the goods on your porch. Prayer is opening the door and inviting God into your life asking Him to help you with your problems, not just send you replacement parts. Ask Him to teach you to rejoice in Him, glorify Him, and enjoy Him forever even when life's hard.

Maybe you're here this morning and you need to get some things right with God. Maybe you're a Christian, but you've gotten out of alignment, your soul needs a bit of a tune up, there are some things you haven't been handling very well. Maybe it's time for a rededication, a renewal, a recommitment of your soul to Him. Take some time and pray. Get things worked out.

And maybe you're here with us this morning and you've never really made that commitment. Maybe you're a good person, a spiritual person, a person who prays. But you've never said, God, I'm a sinner and I need to be saved from judgment. You've never really suffered for Jesus because you're not really His – you like some things about Him but there things you've explained away too. You've made a god just the way you want Him, like putting in your order for lunch – none of this, extra that, and some of those on the side – you never have to suffer for God when you make Him the way you want Him to be.

But this morning, maybe you're ready for something real. Something deeper, something stronger, something worth suffering for. Someone who can tell you no, and someone who can tell you go, someone worth worshipping. Someone you can commit your soul to, some one you can do good for and with.

If so, tell Him. There are no special words to pray, you don't have to come down front, just right there, in your chair, or wherever you are, tell Him – God, I believe in You, and I believe that I have not been living the way you want me to live. I believe there is a judgment for that. And I believe that you sent Jesus to save me from that judgment. So, I ask You to forgive me for living life my own way. I commit my life to You. I ask You to show me how to live it and help me do that - come into my life and take over.

If you have prayed that prayer, or one like it, and meant it, you are forgiven and renewed in Christ, and you are welcome to receive communion with us – to receive a reminder of the body and blood of Jesus who suffered for us and calls us to follow Him where we will suffer for a while ourselves and then [when His glory is revealed, ... be glad with exceeding joy](#).

So, let's pray.

I love you church, God loves you; now go love Him, & love others in His name.



Application and Discussion Questions

1 Peter 4:12-19 Life's Hard, Do Good

Summary: When trials come your way don't think it's strange or be ashamed, commit your soul to God, rejoice and keep doing good.

- What do you think: is difficulty in life normal for Christians?
 - Can you think of any passages in Scripture that give the impression life will be easy and enjoyable for those who follow God?
 - Can you think of any passages in Scripture that promise hardship to those who follow God?
 - How much frustration, opposition, and even hostility should you expect to endure in life?

- What are some different sources of opposition and suffering that Christians experience? Think through this on your own, then see the footnote below¹
 - How have you seen or experienced each of these manifest in your life?

- Peter says not to think it's strange or surprising that you will suffer. Can you think of a time when you knew something was coming and that knowledge made the experience easier to endure?
 - What else helps you endure suffering, opposition, or conflict well?

- How do you handle it when people speak poorly of you?
 - Has anyone ever spoken poorly of you because of your Christian faith, beliefs, or practices?
 - Read Matthew 5:11-12. How does this passage relate to 1 Peter 4:14-16?

- What does it mean to commit your soul to God in doing good?
 - What good has God called you to do? What encourages you in doing it?
 - How does knowing that God is a faithful Creator affect your commitment and your endurance of suffering?
 - Read Galatians 6:9-10, how does this relate to 1 Peter 4:19?

¹ There are at least five typical sources: Spiritual forces (i.e. Satan and his demons); other people; the fallen nature of the world (i.e. storms, disasters, disease, etc.); your own choices; and God (who may send or allow a trial to test or correct us).