

XLII. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in Exile

“Unsurprised—Part 3”

I Peter 4:12–19

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This is our third study in this crucial paragraph of Peter’s word to believers in churches in what today is modern day Turkey. I Peter 4:12–16 says [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. [13] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. [14] If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. [15] But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. [16] Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

For the last two years we have had a ministry theme to build in the life of every member of Briarwood that we would embrace a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. We have called it our L.E.A.D focus. Some said ‘why not lifestyle evangelism’ and the response is because our lifestyle doesn’t evangelize. Your lifestyle can open a door or close a door but you have to share the Gospel verbally to evangelize. No one is going to heaven admiring our life. They go to heaven when they come to Christ by faith and faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17). The same Jesus in the same breath that He evangelized also called for discipleship. When Christ said ‘Come’ that was His call to evangelism and then when He said ‘and follow Me’ that was his call to discipleship.

So why have I chosen Peter to undergird this theme of having a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship? Perhaps you have captured some of the reason as we have been in this study on I Peter but as we cover I Peter 4:17–18 in this study you will understand exactly why I chose by the leading of the Spirit this book to undergird this theme. In this epistle, we have embraced a heart of a pastor. I know he is Apostle Peter who had this very special relationship with the Lord but think of him as pastor Peter. He tells us he is a pastor in I Peter 5 when he uses the language ‘I’m your fellow elder.’ It is the same commissioning the Lord gave him by the Sea of Galilee after he restored him with three denials, three affirmations – saying ‘tend My sheep, feed My lambs, nurture My flock’ in essence ‘be a pastor’ – and this is epistle is from a pastor’s heart.

I can sum this up by showing you the heart of this pastor that Peter has given us up to this point in I Peter 4. He is pastoring these people in modern day Turkey whom he has never met as he sends this letter to them. He has done three things that show them this comes from a pastor’s heart. One is he wants God’s people to know as a pastor who you are in Christ because of Christ. His shorthand has been the word ‘elect’ so what you are through the sovereign hand of God not by what you did, but by what God did through His Son in His life, death and resurrection, you are His elect. Peter has given us 15 Gospel blessings of we are in Christ because of Christ up to this point in this epistle.

Secondly, he is telling us now this is what you do for Christ, not for salvation but because of Christ. This is our life and that’s the life of a sojourner, pilgrim, exile for this world is not our home we’re just passing through but we have a mission and a message while we’re going

through this world for Jesus Christ. By the time we get through the book of I Peter we will have studied 10 Gospel commands that Peter gives us that we are to do as exiles for Christ.

Now one third to almost a half of the epistle has been pre-occupied with getting us ready for what will happen when Christ is our identity and we are living our life not for salvation but for your Savior. So the third thing Peter gives us from his pastor's heart is what we can expect in Christ in this broken world. It is called Christian suffering. We're not talking about the suffering we go through as a result of a broken world but what a believer can expect – suffering for Christ's sake. In other words, all you have to do is no longer confess Jesus or live for Jesus and this suffering will quit but as long as Christ is your Lord and Savior, you identify with Him and bear His Name, you will suffer as a Christian. This is not the suffering for sins of evil doer, murderer, meddler, adultery, fornication, sexual perversion, etc.

Peter is talking about those who own Christ and being in this world when you do that you will suffer for Him. All Peter is doing is picking up on what His Lord said in His benediction in Matthew 5:10–11 which says [10] *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* This is one of the marks of being a believer.

He has taught us that every true Christian will suffer to some degree, at some time, in some way for Christ in this world. It may be the piercing sword of an insult or the piercing sword in your body. It may be a fiery trial of ridicule or a fiery trial of a post where you are set on fire for Christ. He also said when you suffer and not if you suffer and all he is doing is picking up on what Jesus said. Jesus also said John 15:20, [15] *“If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”* Paul says in II Timothy 3:12, [12] *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Philippians 1:29 says [29] *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.*

Peter is telling us that this suffering for Christ's sake is inevitable so he wants us to be ready and don't be surprised. He wants us to have the mind of Christ and to be competent. He wants our Christ-centered world and life view to be ready for this and to know how to respond. With this in mind he has told us four basic things. One is that it is temporary. Two it is fiery so it hurts. Three is that means it's grievous and fourthly it has a purpose in the hand of a sovereign God. It is not accidental, circumstantial or arbitrary. God sovereignly takes what Satan and the world would do against Christ and His people and uses it very specifically.

I call this Christian suffering 101 and when this suffering comes God does five things. One He is using it to remove the dross from our life. Dross means impurities. It is when a metal is brought to a boiling point and the impurities come to the top and are skimmed off. When the fiery trials come it burns away the dross in our life. They are the things that are clinging to our faith, like the encumbrances, the entanglements that don't need to be there.

Secondly, it prepares and provides a platform to stand for Christ. That's why Peter says when you suffer for His name sake you will be ready to give an account for the hope that is within to everyone who asks you. When you suffer for Him you may hear from others things like, 'Why are you willing to suffer for Christ, why do you suffer the way you suffer, why are blessing those who would persecute you' which gives you an opportunity of amplification to tell others about Christ. Christ not only gives you a platform in your successes in life but He also gives you a platform in suffering for Him in life.

Thirdly, Peter says that we will be given His felt presence and power of the Spirit of God. I know I have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit but when those moments come His Spirit will give me what to say and how to say it. I love the language Peter uses in I Peter 4:14 when he says *because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you*. He could have said that He is with you and in you and he would be right to say that but he uses the word rests when the Spirit of grace and power come for He is covering you just as a hen covers her chicks.

Then the fourth things that happens in Christian suffering is He is preparing you for a new heavens and a new earth. Christian suffering reminds me that my feet and hands may be here but my heart and my eyes are on Jesus. Come quickly Lord Jesus. When He comes that suffering is done for there will be no crying, no disease, no pain, and no grieving for it will be nothing but the glory of being with the company of the unashamed and the redeemed in the presence of Christ in a new heavens and a new earth forever. I have something temporary here that is reminding me of the eternal that I have there. The weight of my sin and shame have been rolled away and now I have the weight of glory and grace that is coming.

Fifthly this suffering provokes our love of the brethren. You come to Jesus personally but you don't live for Jesus individually. We are joined by the Spirit. Don't play church where you attend if it fits in your schedule. We the church are joined together in Christ and when one grieves we all grieve, when one rejoices we all rejoice. When one suffers we suffer with them and we now are promoting our love into one another's life at those very moments. So far this is what Peter has taught us but now I want to go a level deeper.

I want to go to what I call Christian suffering 201. There are two more things Peter wants us to know about Christian suffering which will take us to another level and he will do it with one clear declaration and two rhetorical questions. I love what someone said and I'm not sure who it was but they said whenever you suffer it is a taste of glory and it's preparing you for glory. Let's go to the next two verse in I Peter 4.

I Peter 4:17–18 says [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?* [18] *And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*

The one declaration he gives is the first part of verse 17 which says *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God*. What does he mean when he says this? I think it will be very helpful for me to show you what this verse is saying from its original language, the Greek. Let's start with his use of the word time here. There are two Greek words for time. There is the word *chronos* which means a succession of moments or looking at the moment. Then there is the word *kairos* which means a season and that's where we are here. We are in a season of judgment. This is where we find out about God being our Judge.

One might think 'how can God be my Judge if I'm saved?' In this passage we are in a season of judgment. What kind of judgment? Here is Greek lesson number two. This is a big praise right here for we are in a time of *krima* judgment. We are not in a time of *katakrima* judgment. I'm happy about the word He uses here because *katakrima* is the word that refers to God's condemning judgment. This is the condemnation used in Romans 8:1 which says [1] *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*. I do not dread *katakrima* because I am saved so all of my condemning judgment that is due to me fell on Jesus at the cross so I am free of *katakrima* judgment. I will be able to stand at the judgment seat because Jesus has written me into the Lambs Book of Life by His blood.

The word used for judgment in I Peter 4:17 is *krima* and it is referring to evaluating chastening judgment. It is what a parent ought to be doing with their children when they

disobey. What is it I need to do for them to learn not to do it anymore? This is the kind of judgment Peter uses in this verse. It is what is referred to in James 3 that a pastor like me tremble over. James 3:1 says *[1] Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be **judged** with greater strictness.* Praise God He is not talking about the condemning judgment so that when I mess up a text of Scripture I don't have to spend eternity in hell. Jesus took care of that for me but Jesus does evaluate my ministry. Am I building wood, hay and stubble or gold, silver and precious jewels in the life of God's people? Am I being faithful to the Word or unfaithful to the Word? God is evaluating those whom He has called to preach and then they stand before Him to give an account of their ministry. Wood, hay and stubble burns up and gold, silver and precious jewels will last.

James is telling me that Jesus is constantly evaluating what we are doing and He will work in our life by bringing disciplinary judgment so that I no longer teach what I ought not to. He keeps developing those whom He has called to preach and teach. It's what we read in I Corinthians 11:28–32 which says *[28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are **weak and ill, and some have died.** [31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged (krima) by the Lord, we are disciplined (krima) so that we may not be condemned (katakrima) along with the world.*

In this passage we see some of the kind of disciplinary judgment God brings on those who are blaspheming the Lord's Supper. God loves His Son enough that if you blaspheme Him at the Lord's Table as His children then He will bring disciplinary judgment in your life and it could be through weakness, illness or even death. It is an act of His love for us and He does it impartially and lovingly for us. This is the kind of judgment that Peter is referring to as the season that is before us now.

The time of *katakrima* is coming but that's not what those who are in Christ will face. Think of it this way. When Jesus came into this world as the Incarnation, He didn't come as He could have from the throne to bring judgment but He came to bear our judgment, our *katakrima*. But when He comes again it will be to bring judgment, the *katakrima*, yet for us in Christ now we are in a season of disciplinary judgment that is beginning with His people, the household of God. Peter has already dealt with this to some degree in I Peter 1.

I Peter 1:17–19 says *[17] And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

Hebrews 12:5–8 says *[5] And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." [7] It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? [8] If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

God lovingly won't let you walk off into sin for He will always be evaluating and working in your life. He has many methods to call you away from your sin and one of them is Christian suffering. He using that in your life and with His people. Peter loves to call His people the household of God. Peter talks about the church twice and he never uses the word

ekklesia in his epistles which is the Greek word for God's church. He uses a familial word. Paul uses both *ekklesia* and the household of God. I want to show you how household of God is used as the church.

Ephesians 2:17–20 says [17] *And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far off (Gentiles) and peace to those who were near (Jews). [18] For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. [19] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the **household of God**, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. We are a part of the family of God.*

Our ancestors in the Presbyterian Church called the building where the church gathers, the meeting house and I love that. The church, household of God, His people meet in the meeting house. So in I Peter 4:17, he tells us the *krima* judgment has begun and *katakrima* judgment will be the end. Right now there is a beginning judgment and it is from the household of God.

I do think those who translated the ESV got two things wrong in this I Peter 4 text. I Peter 4:17–18 says [17] *For it is time for judgment to begin **at** the household of God; and if it begins with us (the elect), what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? [18] And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”* The first thing is the Greek word used in the translation of ‘at’ is *apo* and it ought to be translated as ‘from’ and when God's loving discipline starts from the household of God it is a message to the world that it won't end there for you need to be ready for that which is to come. It has begun in and from His church and it will end at the Judgment Seat.

Then Peter give two rhetorical questions. The first question in ‘if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God?’ Notice the language Peter uses. Obey – it's not simply faith and not because our obedience saves us but because obedience is the evidence of true faith. It shows God we love Him. Notice how he says ‘obey the Gospel of God’ and not the gospel of me or the gospel of some church. It is the Gospel of God, Biblical truth that God saves sinners by His grace and for His glory through Christ and Christ alone who is the way, the truth and the life. If God is doing this in the life of His people to set them free from the practice of their sin, what will be the outcome to those who have said ‘no’ to the Gospel and loved their sins? In case we didn't get it, he gives a second rhetorical question.

The second rhetorical question is ‘if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ This comes from Proverbs 11. He uses two names for the same type of a person. I don't want to live in relationship with God and I want to embrace breaking the law of God because it's all about me. The second thing I think the translators of the ESV got wrong is using the word ‘scarcely’ for I think the proper translation from the Greek word used here should be ‘difficulty.’

It is saying ‘if the elect, God's people, are saved with difficulty.’ How did I get saved from the power of sin? God sent His Spirit to search me out to bring me to faith and repentance. He overcame all of my inclinations to sin. He broke the power and dominion of sin. It was an effort on God's grace to set me free. It cost God His Son to set me free. His Son went to the cross and became my sin on the cross as He dies and bears my judgment on that cross. If it takes that kind of difficulty to save us from the power, penalty, practice and presence of our sins and if God in His sovereign providence has to orchestrate all of life to search us out even with suffering to set us free, what will become of those who say ‘no’ to what God has done? What will be their end?

So here are the two takeaways for this study. Here is what pastor Peter wants you to know at another level when you encounter that metastasized self, when you encounter people making you a promise as a believer and then re-nigging because you're a believer, when an employer finds a way to fire you because of your identity in Christ, when people insult, when they have sent you to the fiery post. The first takeaway is our suffering for Christ is a manifest call from God the Father to be done with sin and pursue holiness for the glory of God. It is not about my happiness, my success, my health or my wealth, but it's about the glory of God in a people imperfectly but intentionally pursue sin for it's a manifest call where He loves you enough for you to be done with sin.

Yes you're forgiven, saved and there's no *katakrima* but there are consequences to sin. There are consequences to your fascination with pornography or your duplicity in life. You may be forgiven but there are consequences and broken homes, marriages and lost ministries. God has multiple means to call us away from sin but one of them is discipline and He will use it because He wants us to understand sin is death for breaking God's law breaks you.

I have heard this saying many times in my life; forgiveness is easier than permission. But it is not. Do you know what it cost God for you and me to be forgiven? It cost God His Son. Be done with sin. Sin will not be done with you for you have a principle of sin living in you. There is a Father who loves you enough who will discipline you and sometimes He has to use Christian suffering so that we see how serious He is about sin, because He is serious about you. He loves you.

I have recently come back from a sabbatical. Two years ago one of my sisters went home to be with the Lord and where I went for my sabbatical I had to ride right by where she died on interstate 20 in a car accident. She was one of my best friends and there were so many ways I was able to connect with my sisters as my best friends. People have asked me why integrity is such a big deal to me and then I talk about my dad but all these things come together for me in one event.

I was in the eighth grade and every morning when I would go to school my parents would give me 30 cents. My lunch at school cost 25 cents and they gave me an extra nickel so I could get an ice cream cup after school and eat it on the way home. One day my mom didn't have a quarter and a nickel to give me so she gave me two quarters. At the end of the day I put the quarter down on the counter and had five cups of ice cream. The next morning my mom said 'son, here's a quarter and with the 20 cents you had left over yesterday use one of the nickels for today.' I said 'yes mom.' I was just going to go without ice cream to cover my sin.

Mothers just know things. So when she gave me the quarter she said 'show me your nickel.' I told my mom it was downstairs which was lie number two. I guess I was hoping God was just going to throw a nickel out in my bedroom somewhere but I couldn't find one. I saw the vent in my room and got close to the vent as I called my sister Vicky through the vent. She said 'What do you want?' I said 'Do you have a nickel?' She said 'No, I have a half a dollar.' I said 'Bring it, I'm in trouble.' She snuck it to me and I don't remember the story I told of how a half dollar coin came from 20 cents. I noticed from my parents eyes as I was telling the story that this was not going well.

They called my sister Vicky in. I didn't realize that the same vent we were talking through also went to my mom and dad's bedroom and they heard our whole conversation. They asked Vicky if she lied and she said 'yes.' My dad asked me if I lied and I said 'yes.' He said 'We're not going to have lying in this house. We are going to tell the truth in this house. Son you sit here.' He went and got the rod and disciplined my sister as he said to me 'now watch

what it cost.’ Three things happened to me on that day. I found out my father thought pretty seriously about integrity. I realized how much my sister loved me and how much I had cost her. I remembered that this stuff is serious. So a bond developed between me and my sister that kept building as the years went by.

A lesson came that a Father will love us enough to even bring controlled suffering from evaluations to discipline us because He loves us and hates the sin that much. Let’s be done with sin and when it comes flee to the cross and learn. When suffering comes realize Christian suffering 101 and Christians suffering 201. I am reminded again that sin costs. I want to be done with it.

The second takeaway is our suffering for Christ is a manifest call from God the Father to seek and save the lost with the Gospel of God. If the evaluating disciplinary judgment is now in season that helps us get rid of the practice of sin, from the household of God then it is going to move outside the household of God it is no longer evaluating disciplinary judgment for it is now condemning and what will their end be, those who have said ‘no’ to the Gospel of God? How can I be silent about the Gospel of God to them knowing from the Word of God what their end will be? If God brings temporary, fiery, intentional, grievous suffering upon His people to set them free from the practices of sin, what will this God of glory and justice do in the Day of Judgment when men and women stand before Him naked in their sins? It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31) and that Day of Judgment is certainly appointed.

On this day I have the message to deliver them so how can I be silent? I don’t know who to give credit to for this illustration but there was an older gentleman who said to the younger one who had just graduated from college, ‘son, what’s next?’ The son said ‘I hope to get married.’ ‘What’s next?’ ‘I hope to get a great job.’ ‘What’s next?’ ‘I hope to have a family granddaddy.’ ‘What’s next?’ ‘I hope to have a great house and a great home.’ ‘What’s next?’ ‘I hope to have influence.’ ‘What’s next?’ ‘I hope to have grandchildren.’ ‘What’s next?’ ‘I guess I’ll just die.’ ‘Son, what’s next?’ What will your end be?

Not a temporary, evaluating judgment, an eternal irrevocable judgment – not a fiery trial but the fire of hell – not momentary discomfort but outer darkness and isolation for all eternity – not for a moment but forever – what will your end be? If this is beginning now what will their end be? We have been saved from the weight of our shame, sin and guilt and have been given the weight of glory and grace, then rescue the perishing, care for the dying, call them by mercy and grace in this day who will save. We bore the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them the day of weeping and gnashing is coming but today can be the day of the joy of their salvation.

This is why we want a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Let’s be done with sin and have everything with Jesus. Let’s go to those whose end is perishing and tell them of Jesus who saves in this day. When I was coming back from my sabbatical this past week my wife and I passed seven accidents in the state of Georgia. A seven hour drive became a ten hour drive. Then we passed the last accident in Alabama and I’ll never forget it. As we looked at the mangled cars, knowing what had to have happened, my wife and I looked at each other saying ‘What was their end?’ Rescue the perishing with a way of life that tells people verbally Jesus saves. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

May the Lord speak to our hearts in these moments of silent prayer. God our God we do love You. Please help us. Speak now to Your people. May they be equipped for the inevitability and

not surprised at Christian suffering. May they not only learn those deeper lessons but learn that suffering is telling us to be done with sin. Be ready to know and follow Me. God is here for you. He loves you. He loves you enough to even bring discipline so that you will love the truth and glory of your God of grace. God is reminding you that if it is with difficulty you are being saved, what will come of those who stand naked in their sins apart from Christ? Go to the perishing. Seek to bring the Gospel of God that saves to the lost. Jesus, please be at work for I pray this in Your Name, Amen.

Power Point

THE HEART OF PASTOR PETER

1. Who you are in Christ because of Christ – Elect
2. What you do for Christ because of Christ – Exile
3. The Inevitability of Suffering for Christ
Temporary – Fiery – Grievous – Purpose

CHRISTIAN SUFFERING 101

1. Dross removed
2. Platform provided
3. Felt Presence and Power of the Spirit of God
4. Preparation for a New Heavens and a New Earth
5. Promote the Love of the Brethren

CHRISTIAN SUFFERING 201

One Clear Declaration
Two Rhetorical Questions

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Our suffering for Christ is a manifest Call from God the Father to be done with sin and pursue Holiness for the Glory of God.*
- 2. Our suffering for Christ is a manifest Call from God the Father to seek and save the lost with the Gospel of God.*