



12/3/25

I remember someone asking me several years ago, "If you had to face a trial in life, how would you handle the fact that God didn't stop it?" I thought about it for a minute and said, "I always have to go back to the gospel." No matter what we go through in life, good or bad, it pales in comparison to the gospel. Are you suffering? The good news is that Jesus sees your hurt and is there for you... and He suffered exponentially more so that your suffering is only temporary... that's the gospel. Are you celebrating something? Everything worth celebrating has far more value because Jesus brings eternal celebration... that's the gospel. The gospel brings a whole new dimension to our perspective. As we move in to this month of celebrating Christ's birth, I pray that even that will bring us back to the hope of the gospel.

*Merry Blessings,
Jonna*

1 Peter 4:12-19

Was Noah's life easy? What must have it been like to be building an ark in a place where they didn't know what rain was... nowhere near water? I would imagine people looked at him like he was weird or nuts. Some probably mocked. For Noah and for all who follow Jesus, God doesn't give us the easy button. Paul even says in Philippians 1:29 that it is a privilege to suffer for Jesus. Every believer will face fiery trials. And every person who chooses not to believe will face the eternal fire.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Yes, the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to eternal life... but it leads to LIFE. Let me never forget that Jesus suffered more than anyone because He took on Himself every sin ever to be committed by every person ever. AND He took the full weight of the wrath of God on Himself... so that I could walk through that narrow gate and follow the way to life.

One of the traits of truth in scripture is that nothing is hidden. God doesn't hide the truth from us. He doesn't say everything is going to be great and then do a bait and switch where we

face suffering... that's the devil's plan. God puts the whole truth out there. He says, "This is going to be hard. You WILL face trials in this world. But don't lose heart. I have overcome the world." One of the passages that helps me understand the privilege of suffering is 1 Peter 1:12-19.

Vs. 12-13 ~ "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."

When do I feel blindsided by trials that seem to come out of nowhere... to the point that I question God's goodness... that I question whether all His paths really are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who follow Him as Psalm 25:10 says? I think it's when I have wrong expectations.

I expect that being a Christian means having my best life now. I think I have sometimes equated Christianity with "the American dream," the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness... which equates to wealth, status, and comfort. In Christ, I do have life, liberty, and happiness. But the life I live for is eternal life. The liberty I celebrate is freedom from sin and death. The happiness I enjoy is the hope of heaven and peace in Christ Jesus. That is the expectation I can anchor my life in. But no promise of a comfortable life here on earth. No promise of visualizing my own dream and attaining it. I have the promise of a Spirit filled, sanctifying, strengthened life and the purpose of fulfilling God's plan for me while I'm here.

I should expect that trials will come while I live on this earth. This life on earth is a war that has already been won. But just as God promised the Israelites the Promised Land, they still had to fight the battles to get there. The daily battle I fight more than any battle is the battle between my flesh, which is hostile to God, and my spirit, which wants to please God. I should not be surprised when my flesh doesn't die easily.

So instead of being surprised by the battles and the trials, I need to rejoice... not for the trial, but for what God will do in my heart through the trial. When I am willing to go through whatever trial the Lord allows in my life, I can celebrate that I am aligned with Christ who suffered for me. And I also get to celebrate that my suffering, like His, is not in vain. His glory will be revealed in its fulness, and I will get to celebrate with Him for all eternity in heaven. The battle lasts for a blip in time. The glory lasts forever.

Vs. 14 ~ "If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

Being insulted by the world because of my faith in Jesus does not mean that God has abandoned or forgotten me. Being willing to be maligned for the sake of Christ by those who don't know Christ shows that I am truly His own, and that the Spirit of glory and of God rests on me.

The Spirit of glory... The Lord's glory may not be revealed fully today, but I have the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, dwelling in me... resting on me... so that I can have His peace and strength in the midst of the trials.

The Spirit RESTS on me. He does not come and go... then He might not be there when I need Him most. But He rests on me... always ready to refresh my soul and sustain me through whatever I face. And let me not forget... I am not entitled to anything but hell! Everything He gives me is an undeserved gift of grace, the generosity of His love.

Vs. 15 ~ "But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler."

Earlier in Peter's letter, he said, "For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure?" Honestly, I think in this day and age it's easy to even resent suffering for sin. It's easy to justify and rationalize it. I know as one who has a "despair" heart I have spent a lot of time in life viewing myself as a victim of both people and God. But murder, hatred, stealing, doing any form of evil (anything with wrong motives that don't glorify God), or even gossip all deserve the discipline of God. No trial I face justifies my sin, and I am certainly NOT a victim by God's hand. He is my rescue! Let me not forget... Jesus faced the worst of trials, and He never sinned.

It is not God's desire to discipline me because of my sin. His desire is to disciple me so that I experience "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). It's really important that I understand and believe WHO He is so that I don't get stuck in the WHY of what He allows. If He truly loves me and He is the God of peace and hope and joy and compassion and love, then I can trust that any suffering He allows into my life is for a purpose and it will result in my good (Romans 8:28).

Vs. 16 ~ "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name."

This is why I don't have to be ashamed or live in shame. Shame over my sin gets me no closer to God. Celebration of His incredible mercy does. O Lord, I pray that I will trust that Your Spirit rests on me and blesses me in the trials. I pray that I will consider it an honor and a privilege to go through whatever You allow me to go through, always remembering what Jesus went through for me. Please help me to keep the gospel at the forefront of my mind. I pray that I will glorify You because I do bear the name "Christian," a follower of Christ, a blood relative of the Anointed Messiah because of His blood shed for me.

Vs. 17-18 ~ "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? And 'If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'"

Judgment for the household of God... children of God, believers, the saved... is different than judgment of those who refuse the gospel. Judgment for me is not to condemn me, but to

sanctify and transform me. While I'm here on earth, I am going through the sanctification process... being transformed one degree of glory to the next. That comes through suffering.

But for those who refuse the Lord, the ungodly and the sinner, judgment brings condemnation. I have no reason to think I'm better than the ungodly and the sinner. The only difference between them and me is that I have embraced the gospel of Jesus and confessed Him as my Lord... and they haven't. Jesus makes me righteous. I have no righteousness apart from Him and I can't earn it. Romans 5:17 says that it's His free gift to me.

The quote in this passage is taken from Proverbs 11:31, "If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!" The discipline I face on earth is temporary... only for the time I live here. When God takes me home to heaven, my flesh will be gone and I will be free of sin. Therefore, I will be free of His discipline... and I will get to experience eternal life with Him where "He will wipe away every tear from my eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

But for the ones who reject the gospel and the free gift of salvation and righteousness, for the ungodly and the sinner, the judgment will be eternal. I would not wish that on my worst enemy, except the enemy of my soul and his demons.

God's authority is so important for me to grasp. If He is not Lord over all... if His Kingdom does not rule over all... none of His other attributes like love, mercy, or grace, have lasting power in my life. He can be overthrown, so His mercy and acquittal of my sin can be overthrown. But He IS Lord over all. He DOES have all rule and authority and power and dominion. So... let me bow to You, O Lord, in gratitude for this wonderful gift of salvation, redemption, righteousness, and eternal life with You. Let me live out vs. 19...

Vs. 19 ~ "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

Let me suffer according to Your will. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says that You only allow trials that are necessary for growing my faith... my confidence in You. Help me to entrust my soul to You just as Jesus did. 1 Peter 2:21-23 says, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly." O Lord, You judge justly. Please help me to trust You completely with no exception and no compromise. Help the testing of my faith give me greater discernment of Your will, so that I can do what is good and pleasing and perfect for You (Romans 12:2).

"And after I have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called me to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish me. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11).