

November 16, 2025

1 Peter 4:12-19

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

“In the fullness of his wisdom, righteousness, and grace God often allows his own children to be tempted in various ways and for a time to pursue the corruption of their own hearts. God does this to chastise them for their previous sins and to reveal to them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness in their hearts, so that they may be humbled. In addition to various other just and holy results, believers are thereby raised to a closer and more constant dependence on God for their support and are also made more alert in detecting and resisting opportunities to sin”
-Westminster Confession of Faith, 5.5



Grace and Suffering, Part v

1 Peter 4:12-19

BIG IDEA: Since trials and suffering are expected in this world, let us rejoice that they ultimately come from loving and purposeful hands that seek to purify and mark His people for glory.

Or to say it more simply, the Gospel unites cross with crown.

OUTLINE

1. Expected Suffering

2. Tested Suffering

3. United Suffering

4. Distinctive Suffering

5. Endured Suffering

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Who are some people who have seen or see more in you than you do? Did they push or coach you in some way? What did you learn about yourself that you didn't know before?
2. Read 1 Peter 4:12. Are you currently or have you in the past experienced the fiery trials that Peter refers to? In light of this passage, what is true about God in the midst of suffering? How can this truth reshape how you endure suffering when it comes again?
3. Refer to 1 Peter 4:12 and the quotation from the Westminster Confession. How might God, in wisdom and grace, allow you to face temptation and heart-corruption—to chastise, humble, deepen your dependence on Him, and sharpen your resistance to sin?
4. Read 1 Peter 4:13 & refer to John 9:13-25. What is the benefit of suffering?
5. In Peter 4:14, Peter writes, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” Recall a time you faced insult for your faith. How did God's Spirit turn that pain into blessing, and how does this strengthen your resolve to stand for Christ?
6. Read 1 Peter 4:15-16. From the text, Pastor Bill pointed to two distinctives and two results from suffering. What are examples of ways that you can glorify the Lord in your suffering?
7. Refer to 1 Peter 4:17. When you are suffering—exclusion, standing alone, or wrestling with doubts—how can entrusting your soul to God's faithful providence shape you into Christ's likeness? Share a specific struggle and how keeping on in quiet confidence (knowing His Spirit rests on you) changes your response.

“The afflictions of the saints are not a detour but the straight path to glory, for the pattern of Christ is the pattern of the church.”

-Geerhardus Vos

“We must not separate Christ from ourselves or ourselves from Christ. He suffered for us, but also we suffer in Him.”

-John Calvin

“If you suffer for being a Christian – for living in word and deed consistently with the gospel of Jesus Christ – then do not be ashamed if society rejects and reviles you, whether through social ostracism or official prosecution.”

-Karen Jobes

“Judgment day is the most sobering reality that we will all will face.”

-R.C. Sproul

“If there is no judgment, then ultimately our choices don’t matter. But if there is a final judgment, then everything matters.”

-Tim Keller

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In this passage, Peter resumes from chapter 1 the theme of rejoicing in suffering. Why is it to “share Christ’s sufferings” (v. 13) something to rejoice in? When we are suffering, things can be confusing, but on the other side of suffering, we gain a greater perspective. With that in mind, consider why Peter says that joy will increase when Christ’s glory is revealed. Did you know? Peter warned his readers that they would soon endure a “fiery trial” (4:12). In other words, they should expect persecution. He probably wrote this letter not long before the Roman emperor Nero began a campaign of persecution against Christians in Rome. Peter wrote this second letter; apparently, he knew that he would die soon (1:14). He was probably martyred during the persecution of Christians following the Great Fire of Rome in A.D. 64. See also 1 Pet. 4:12.

- ESV Student Study Bible

Praise to Jesus-We praise God that Jesus bore the ultimate fiery trial at the cross. We glorify God that trials are not random but refining, proving the genuineness of our faith. We rejoice that even in suffering we are blessed because the “Spirit of glory and of God rests upon” us (v. 14).

Repentance through Jesus-We confess how easily we despise suffering rather than trusting it as God’s loving and refining hand. We repent when our hardships are the fruit of sin, not faithfulness.

Consecration for Jesus-We rededicate ourselves to living with great Gospel hope in a world of suffering...knowing that our present suffering will give way to ultimate joy when Christ’s glory is revealed.

Church, since trials and sufferings are expected in this world, let us rejoice that they ultimately come from God’s loving and purposeful hands that, by the Spirit, seek to purify and mark us for glory in Jesus. May your present cross point you to tomorrow’s Gospel crown!

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. Do you like surprises? Why or why? Ask everyone in the family to share a time when they were surprised.
2. In verse 1, we read, "Christ suffered in the flesh." How do you feel about a Christians' suffering and hardship after you read that from verse 1? (Christ's death and resurrection provide the fuel for our lives of suffering by saving us and by providing the Holy Spirit to connect us with God and with each other. Christ's suffering allows Him to be empathetic and compassionate.)
3. What do we learn from verses 13-16 about how we should deal with suffering and persecution while we live in this broken and sinful world? (Peter describes our experience with suffering to include joy/rejoicing and blessing. This is not a common view among Christians and certainly not in the unbelieving world. We need to remember that we have been given the Holy Spirit to strengthen and comfort us, especially as we face suffering.
4. What does it look like for believers and followers of Christ to face judgment? (In verses 17-18, Peter points us to holy living in the present as the way we deal with our upcoming judgment before God. The Bible teaches us all that we will face judgment. As Christians, we are not supposed to be anxious about this judgment since Christ bore our sins on the cross and declared, "It is finished". The best thing to do is to search the Scriptures to find and to be reminded of God's antidote for our human fear, which is a fear of God. God points us to Himself and points us to His promises. If your child is unsure about their belief in Jesus, then take time to talk and pray with them.)
5. What does it mean that in verse 19 that we can suffer "according to God's will"? (This means that God's good purposes and His will for us includes suffering based on our beliefs about Jesus.)

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:35-39

1 Peter 1:6-7

Matthew 5:10-12

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:17-18

1 Peter 1:6-7

James 1:2-4

Psalm 37:5-7

1. In verse 12, Peter tells believers not to be surprised at the “fiery trial” that tests them. Why do you think we’re often caught off guard when hardship comes? How does remembering that God is not absent—but actively refining you through trials—change how you see your suffering?

2. Peter says to “rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings.” (v.13) What does it mean to share in Christ’s sufferings? Why would this be something that ultimately leads to joy when His glory is revealed?

3. Have you ever faced criticism or exclusion for your faith? How does this verse help you see that God’s Spirit is actually near and active in those moments?

4. In verses 15–16, Peter distinguishes between suffering for doing evil and suffering for doing good. Why is this distinction important? What are some examples of ways you can glorify God through faithful endurance rather than reacting in sin?

5. What do you think Peter means by “it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God” (v. 17)? How can trials and suffering serve as God’s way of purifying His people and growing our holiness?

6. What does it look like for you to entrust yourself to God in hard seasons? How can you practice this kind of trust and obedience even when you don’t understand what God is doing?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Peter says that we, as followers of Christ, should not be surprised when we face trials as a result of our faith and obedience.

Question: In what ways could it threaten our faith in God if we were to not properly anticipate or expect suffering?

2. Not only may suffering not undermine our faith in God, it actually may become the occasion for the strengthening and purifying of our faith. (See again 1 Peter 1:6-7)

Question: How might “participating in the sufferings of Christ” (v.13) actually draw us closer to the Lord? (See also Acts 5:41)

Question: How might trials make us more morally fit to receive our inheritance?

3. Verse 19 assures us that all suffering passes through the sovereign hands (and will) of God. Here we are also reminded of God’s love and faithfulness.

Question: How does our theology (our view of God) affect how we see our trials and suffering?

4. Peter first assures us that there will be present blessings (v.14) in our suffering for Christ. The word “blessing” refers to the fact that we can experience true joy and even flourishing (!) in the Lord (because of the Spirit’s presence with us, v.14). But Peter also assures us (once again) of our future rewards and blessings (v.13--” that we may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”). (See also Matthew 5:10-12)

Reflect: How joyful will it be when we see the Lord at his return? How good it will be for those who suffer now to one day hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” How else do you picture these future rewards? How does this motivate us to keep persevering in our present trials?

Scriptures for further study:

1 Peter 1:6-7

Acts 5:41

Matthew 5:10-12

Living Hope: How God's Glorious Grace in Jesus Shapes and Empowers Us by the Spirit to Live with Gospel Grit in a Foreign Land.



Daniel in the Lion's Den by Briton Riviere, 1872

About the Artist: Briton Rivière, a British painter known for his animal paintings, particularly those featuring dogs and wild animals with deep emotion and dramatic flair, came from an artistic family. His father, William Rivière, was a drawing master and art teacher. Rivière initially studied at the University of Oxford, drawn to literary and historical themes, but later developed a fascination with animals and became renowned for his ability to imbue them with emotional depth and narrative presence.

About the Artwork

"Daniel in the Lion's Den" (1872) depicts the biblical story with lifelike lions, a popular and symbolic theme in Victorian England. It explores faith under trial, divine protection, and moral strength against tyranny, themes that resonated with Victorian audiences during a time when Christian values and moral courage were emphasized.

In Riviere's painting, Daniel's calm, unarmed demeanor symbolizes absolute trust in God. His gaze suggests prayer, hope, or spiritual communion, not fear. He represents the righteous man steady in the face of evil. The lions, though fierce, are subdued, a miracle of restraint. Riviere doesn't show angels or supernatural intervention; the restraint is invisible, spiritual. Some lions are relaxed, others alert, suggesting the tension between nature and divine command. Each lion has a distinct personality, reflecting the mystery of creation. The focused light on Daniel recalls God's presence in darkness. The murky den symbolizes the unknown, death, or temptation, yet Daniel remains untouched. Unlike dramatic biblical scenes, there's no movement or violence. The silence emphasizes Daniel's victory through trust, countering 19th-century action-heavy storytelling with a meditation on spiritual endurance.

1 Peter and Daniel in the Lion's Den

This painting, based on a biblical scene, helps us understand the overall theme of the New Testament letter. 1 Peter teaches Christians that as God's elect, they are called to live holy lives of faithful witness, enduring suffering with hope rooted in God's grace, while embracing their Gospel identity as a holy, royal priesthood in a hostile world. Like Daniel in the Old Testament, we are strangers in a distant place. Jesus told his disciples and us in the Gospel of John that we are "not of this world." Hebrews reminds the church that "this world is not their permanent home." Even within 1 Peter, God's people are called "sojourners and exiles."

Like Daniel, the darkness of this broken, sinful, and fallen world is always present. While we may never face a physical lion, Peter's first letter tells us that our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, and the spiritual forces of evil are ever present. Yet, like Daniel, we must face the opposition with a Gospel poise, knowing that which is unseen is more powerful than what is seen and against us. Peter uses the language of "standing firm" in God's grace as we encounter all forms of darkness.

Church, may we see the beauty of 1 Peter in its overall message: God's glorious grace leading us to Gospel grit as sojourners in a dark world. But may we not just perceive its beauty but also embrace God's unique calling in these words: stand firm!