

Introduction/ Bibles/ Pastor Rob

1 Peter 4—not covering every verse in chap 4 but will hopefully connect the dots between most of it.

Peter, the author of this letter, is writing to encourage his fellow brothers and sisters who are the elect exiles—the chosen sojourners—who are struggling and confused because they are suffering because of their faith.

The people of God are discouraged due to the treatment from the world around them. The church is being mistreated and ridiculed because of their identification with Jesus Christ. And they need to be encouraged. They need their hope strengthened.

Sound familiar? It should. Following Jesus makes us different. Being holy gets you noticed. The darker the times are, the brighter the light of Christ is. And because of that, we will experience attacks, and harmful behavior toward us that causes suffering.

By the gospel, we are called out of this world and yet we still find ourselves in this world. *In the world but not of it*. Which means, God has not only chosen us for *salvation*, but he has chosen us to *suffer for his name*.

Which means we must...

Adopt a theology of suffering (1-4, 12-16) it's the first thing we see in the verses before us. Peter is telling the church to have a biblical understanding of the suffering they are encountering.

Verse 1; **Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking**, (proactively and intentionally be ready with the mentality that if Jesus suffered for righteousness sake, so will we)

This is the reality for the church Peter writes to. (17 x's). And it's the reality for us today too. Let's return to the passage as I provide a little commentary as we do. **Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin**, (Not sinless perfection. But rather, you have made up your mind to choose to suffer against your sin in order to not sin) **²so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God**, (there is the purpose for your life—come to Jesus and spend the rest of your life living not for what you want, but for what God wants) **³For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles (unbelievers) want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry**. (all socially acceptable and religious practices. Normal in one way or another BUT not God's will for your life)**⁴With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign (slander, defame) you;** (in our society, usually it's just societal rejection, but someday it very well may be government sanctioned persecution—just like many of brothers and sisters encounter every day) Skip to verses 12-16

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. (Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 2 Tim 3:12 Be surprised if we are not suffering as a Christian—that may mean we are more like the world than Christ)**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.** (blessed when we don't feel like; God's glory and Spirit with us when we feel alone and abandoned—good thing our faith isn't based on our feelings—only by his might can we withstand unjust treatment) **¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.** (that's stupid suffering—don't be stupid cause you will not be blessed) **¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.** (not ashamed to be called a Christian or to suffer as a Christian)

Just to be clear, there are different reasons to experience suffering:

1. *Fallen world*—everyone suffers, all of creation suffers due to the fact the world is broken and deeply affected by sin. Bad things happen to everyone.

2. *Our sin*. Choose to sin, choose to suffer. Better said, choose to suffer the consequences of the sin. This is self-inflicted suffering. We all experience some level of that within our life on a regular basis. Our sin brings a level of suffering into our life.

3. *Righteousness*. That is suffering as a Christian. The better reason to suffer. Choose *not* to sin and inevitably we choose the path of suffering. We first personally struggle/suffer against our own sin. But then choosing not to sin brings the high potential for suffering from the world.

Now adopting or developing a theology of suffering doesn't sound like the most fun thing to do on any day of the week. But its critical for us to know how to biblically navigate the world we find ourselves in.

No matter how we look at it...to some extent being a believer is about suffering. With a lot of good of course, but the suffering is real.

Come to Jesus and get a charmed and trouble-free life is a false gospel. That's the prosperity gospel and it's completely unbiblical;

PG: Above and before anything else, God wants you healthy, wealthy, and wise. And if you are not those things, then you don't have enough faith or maybe sin is blocking that "blessing" from God.

Please don't hear what I am *not* saying. God does bring health. He does provide wealth. He does bring about success and wisdom in many areas of our life.

But that's not the ultimate point of the gospel.

The point of the gospel is that we are eternally damned because of our sin. And God came to us and made a way for us to be reconciled to him. He provided the work through his Son and then did the work within in us so we can believe by faith.

Not so we can name it and claim it. But so, we can die to ourselves and live for Jesus. For the glory of God.

Three things to help us adopt a theology of suffering.

1. **Expect it:** This is the repeated message of 1Peter. **Don't be surprised** when you suffer, when you experience trials and difficulties because of your devotion to Jesus. When living with biblical convictions, values, and behavior—when you live according to God's will for your life—you are in the crosshairs for attacks. The accusations and mistreatment will come. So, expect it.

Expect people not to like you because you love Jesus; Expect it when people automatically judge you to be judgmental because you don't approve of their lifestyle; Expect people to be waiting for you to mess up so they can call you a hypocrite; Expect people to think that you hate anyone who doesn't believe like you. Expect close relationships to be majorly altered or even ended because of your allegiance to Jesus.

The cost of discipleship. Expect it—it's not *if* but *when* it comes. Because it will if you are living a life of righteousness.

*But why does the world attack us when we don't join in their sinful activities and unbiblical beliefs? I thought we were supposed to coexist.

A life indwelt with the Spirit of Christ, walking in obedience to the Word of God exposes the darkness. And a life of holiness cannot endorse that which is unholy. And it's a serious buzzkill for the world when we don't celebrate their sin.

And so, we are maligned, we are insulted, mistreated, dismissed, and made fun of, because their despicable behavior is exposed for what it is--immoral and unholy pleasure of every kind. Our avoidance of sin, highlights theirs. And we need to expect the world's hatred of it.

That's first thing to be aware of with suffering...expect it.

2. **Rejoice in it.** Instead of despair or bitterness, joy. Not *enjoy* it, but rather have joy in it. How can we have joy? Because the ultimate reality is that someday the rule of Jesus will be the norm. And any suffering for our faith is only temporary in the great perspective of eternity.

And rejoice because, you are sharing in the same sufferings of Jesus. **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.**

Count it all joy to experience what Jesus to some degree experienced. Count it all joy to have the same attitude and perspective as Jesus. Which of course aids in our

assurance of salvation. I am not just identified in the waters of baptism with Jesus, I am being identified with him in daily suffering for his name.

And rejoice because God doesn't waste our suffering. In suffering, God does some of his best work. All his work is his best. **Romans 5³ but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.** Let God work through your suffering.

3. **Trust God in it 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.**

What other choice do we have, but to entrust our soul to the faithful Creator? What other hope do we have? None. When suffering for Jesus comes, any hope placed in anything other Jesus is severely misplaced.

Onscreen: Psalm 109: 1-4

Be not silent, O God of my praise!

² For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me, speaking against me with lying tongues.

³ They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause.

⁴ In return for my love they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer.

Like David, we can go to the one who can be trusted. The one who cares for us. The one who does not bring a charge against us because he placed that on his Son Jesus. As believers we entrust ourself to the God of our praise!

We are no longer condemned; We are loved, and no suffering can separate me from Jesus.

Expect it, rejoice in it, and trust God with it

Chosen to suffer-- so what else are we to do when it comes?

Carry on in biblical community (7-11)

Carry on campaign: Right before WW2, England developed the war slogan: *Keep calm and carry on*. It was actually never used, and the slogan was only rediscovered in 2001. The idea was very British: keep your head and keep doing what you have always done. Wartime mentality. Soldier on and live your normal life, despite what is happening around you and even to you.

This is the idea behind what Peter is saying;

⁷ The end of all things is at hand;(pretty ominous/ the end is when suffering ceases and we see Jesus; when our living hope arrives. The end is near and...it's sooner than we realize, so in light of that) **therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

Not the first time in this letter that Peter addresses biblical community. Or suffering for the fact. He tends to return to things. Which he does here.

Regardless of your circumstances, keep doing what you should be doing. When accusations fly. When people marginalize you. When attacks increase because you stand upon the Rock of Jesus...carry on doing what the church is all about doing. Unfortunately, the opposite too many times is true. People start living for Jesus and then realize that it rocks the boat, and they get scared and sit down. And even retreat into the periphery. But suffering, should in fact drive us even more into the family that we have been adopted into. It's easy to think about suffering being only a personal experience instead of it being a corporate reality.

Peter says, don't sit down, but rather carry on within biblical community. Love Jesus more. Pray more. Roll up your sleeves and get to work—more. Don't shrink back, but lean in. In doing so you will find gracious strength, biblical perspective and divine encouragement from those who love you the most.

And it starts with our mindset...we need to...

- ***Get Serious* (vs7) **therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.****

Being self-controlled and sober-minded is having the mentality that this isn't a game. It's realizing what's at stake...God's glory and our soul and people's salvation. Not wasting our time on the frivolous pleasures of the world, but keeping our minds set on things above. Praying for those who persecute you. Blessing them as Jesus teaches us and not cursing them.

Thinking clearly in order to pray clearly. Oh, we need more fervent prayers for those who are so lost that they hate the goodness of God found in Jesus Christ and on display in our life.

Then Peter turns to the One Another's and tells us to practice them.

- ***Practice the One Another's***

The one another's are the heartbeat of the church. Some 50 plus commands in the Bible on how we are to care for each other in the church. The gospel of Jesus transform us from being self-reliant, apathetic, and selfish individuals to other's focused and meeting the needs of our family. And how a church obeys these commandments will determine its health and how well it stands firm in the face of persecution.

- ***Love***

⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Biblical love creates an environment that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Cor. 13. Because of love for one another, sin is addressed and then we forgive, forgive, and then forgive. Yes, yes and yes.

BUT it goes even deeper...love also covers a multitude of sin done *to* us by the world. It covers us when we are sinned against. Like salve to the soul, we are loved on, supported and our burdens are carried by others.

- ***Show hospitality***

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

When we experience persecution. When we are suffering, one of the hardest things to do is to give our time, energy, resources to others. And to do so without grumbling. But again, taking our eyes off of ourselves and offering our self-up for the good of others is the best medicine for our hurting soul.

- ***Serve***

¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies

Every believer has been gifted. You are gifted and those gifts are given to be used. If you are not using those gifts, you are being disobedient. And we (the church) are missing out.

You are saved to serve, not sit. You are saved to be tired from working for Jesus. Not tired from being lazy. Or staying up late playing video games or living for your hobby. But spent for the cause of Jesus. And yes, men, that means first and foremost serving your family by discipling your family. Starting with yourself.

Carry on in biblical community and then always...

Remember who sits on the Throne (11b)
...in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

God is on the throne. And everything that is to be done, is to be done to the glory of God.

When we obey. When the church operates as it should through the grace that God provides. When we bring our struggles, our hurt and our discouragement, and we support, love on and help shoulder the good burden of living for Jesus...God is glorified.

All glory belongs to him because all dominion belongs to Jesus.

So, remember because he sits on the throne, he knows what his children are going through. He is the good king who will ultimately have the last word.

So, take heart, he has overcome the world, and nothing can separate you from his love. Not even suffering.