

Understanding Your Time Of Trial

1Peter 4

1. vv.12-13 Enduring trials with the right attitude.

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 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.

“Concerning the fiery trial which is to try you:”

- Instead of thinking of trials (even **fiery** trials) as **strange** occurrences, we need to learn to see them as ways to **partake of Christ’s sufferings** which lead to a glorious benefit.
- When we partake of His sufferings, we will also partake of His **glory** and **joy**.

Peter once told Jesus to avoid the suffering of the cross- Mark 8:32-33

“Once it seemed strange to the Apostle Peter that his Master should think of suffering. Now he thinks it strange that He could have imagined anything else.”

“Partake of Christ’s sufferings:” We can only **partake** of Jesus’ sufferings because He partook of our humanity and sufferings.

- He became a man and suffered so that our suffering wouldn’t be meaningless.
- It is good to share *anything* with Jesus, even His suffering.

“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:”

- Our desire is to embrace the glory and the joy BUT to avoid any sharing of Jesus’ suffering.
- Or we fixate on suffering and forget that it is but a means to the **glory** and **joy**.

We should never deny the place of suffering in building godliness in the Christian life. Though there is much needless pain we bear through lack of knowledge or faith, there is also necessary suffering.

If suffering was a suitable tool to teach Jesus Hebrews 5:8, it is a suitable tool to teach His servants. “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”

“Rejoice To the extent” implies a measure/degree.

- Those who have suffered more in Jesus will rejoice more at His coming in **glory**.
- The Bible speaks of the Bema Seat Judgment where Christians will appear before the Lord and will be acknowledged and rewarded for their activities done as a follower of Jesus Christ.
- There are warnings about losing your reward and there are measures of rewards, not everyone receives or enjoys the same treatment.
- There are various crowns awarded for distinct types of service to the Lord.

The Bible mentions rewards in heaven multiple times:

Matthew 5:12 reward for **enduring persecution**: “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Luke 6:23, 35 ‘Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.’”

1 Corinthians 3:14 “If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.”

But why are rewards necessary? Won’t being in heaven with God be enough?

God gives rewards in heaven at the Bema, or the judgment seat of Christ based on:

1. Our faithfulness in service to Him - 2 Corinthians 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
2. The rewards will show the reality of our sonship - Galatians 4:7 “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”
3. The justice of God - Hebrews 6:10 “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”
4. In order to fulfill the law of sowing and reaping - Galatians 6:7–9 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”
5. To make good on His promise that our labor in the Lord is not in vain – 1 Corinthians 15:58 “My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Jesus Himself said: Rev. 22:12 “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

2. vv.14-16 The difference between suffering as a Christian and suffering as an evildoer.

“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. Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. If *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

“If you are reproached for the name of Christ:”

- Suffering for **the name of Christ** is a blessing - it shows that we really are following Jesus, and we suffer because we are identified with Him.

“On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified:”

We expect the world to blaspheme Jesus. But He should always be **glorified** among Christians.

“Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody:”

- Suffering as **an evildoer** is deserved and brings shame to the name of Jesus.
- Peter recognized that not all suffering that Christians experience is suffering in **the name of Jesus**.

Peter writes about the suffering that might come to the **murderer**, the **thief**, or the **evildoer**.

He includes the **busybody in other people’s matters**.

Such people *do* suffer a lot of grief and pain, but not for the sake of Jesus.

“If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed:”

- Suffering as a Christian is nothing to be ashamed about, even though the world may despise the Christian.

We don’t glorify God for suffering. But we do glorify Him **in** suffering, and we glorify Him for **what** He will accomplish in us and through us with the suffering.

Christians were first known as “disciples,” “believers,” “the Lord’s disciples,” or “those who belonged to the **Way**” before they were known as Christians.

In Acts 11:26 “*The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*”

Acts 26:28 Agrippa told Paul, “*You almost persuade me to become a Christian.*”

Between Acts 11:26 and 26:28 **Christian** had become a popularized name for the followers of Jesus.

· In 1 Peter 4:16 the idea is that some are suffering because they are identified as Christians. “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”

Examples: The Columbine Martyrs – Cassie Bernall (1999) Colorado

During the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado, gunmen targeted students. When asked if she believed in God, Cassie Bernall reportedly said “Yes” and was shot for her faith. Though some aspects are debated, her testimony sparked global conversations on youth faith and boldness.

Inspiration: Her story inspired books, songs, and a renewed commitment among Christian youth to stand firm in their beliefs.

The Coptic Christians in Libya (2015)

ISIS captured 21 Egyptian Coptic Christian men working in Libya and executed them on a beach.

The men refused to deny Christ and were beheaded. Their last words were reportedly, “Lord Jesus Christ.” The youngest among them, Matthew Ayariga, was not originally a Christian but declared faith upon witnessing the others' courage.

Inspiration: Their sacrifice became a rallying cry for unity among Christians, and the Coptic Church canonized them as martyrs. Their faith in death inspired millions.

3.vv.17-19 Committing your soul to God in the midst of suffering.

“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? Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”

We are called to follow the pattern set by Jesus Himself – 1Peter 2:23 “Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to him that judges righteously.”

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God:”

Peter tells us that judgment begins at the **house of God**.

- Now in this life: God uses suffering as a **judgment** in a positive, purifying sense for Christians.

It is right for judgment to begin at the house of God!

- If we are the Regenerated, we ought to live as Regenerated people.
- We say that they are a holy people, separated unto Christ; so, we ought to be holy, and separate from the world, as He was.”
- 2Cor 6:14-18 “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. Therefore, “Come out from among them and be separate,” says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Now is our time of *fiery trial* - 1 Peter 4:12; the ungodly will have their fire later.

- The fire you endure now is meant to purify you.
- The fire the ungodly will endure will punish them.
- There is never punishment from God for Christians in sufferings, only purification.
- For the Christian, the issue of *punishment* was settled once and for all at the cross, where Jesus endured all the punishment the Christian could ever face from God.

The same fire that consumes straw will purify gold.

The fire is the same, but its **purpose** in **application** is different, and its **effect** is different upon the straw and the gold.

Christians do suffer some of the same things the ungodly do, yet the **purpose** of God is different and the **effect** is different.

“If it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

Peter’s sobering application is clear:

If this is what God’s *children* experience, what will become of those who have made themselves His enemies?

How can they ever hope to stand before the judgment and wrath of God?

Christians can rejoice that the sufferings faced in this life are the worst they will ever face throughout all eternity.

This is our worst part of eternity – it’s the best part of eternity for the unbeliever.

“If the righteous one is scarcely saved:”

If this is true – that the salvation of the righteous does not come without difficulty – then it should make us pause if we or others seem to have an easy salvation.

It isn’t that our salvation is difficult in the sense of earning it or finding a way to deserve it; it is all the free gift of Jesus Christ.

Our salvation *is* hard in the sense that the claims of discipleship challenge us and demand that we cast away our idols and our sins. **Die to Self!**

Real discipleship and genuine following after Jesus Christ is a hard thing, so we understand why Peter quoted the passage from Proverbs 11:31, “**the righteous one is scarcely saved.**”

“Those who suffer according to the will of God - Commit their souls to Him:”

The ancient Greek word “**commit**” is a term used for leaving money on deposit with a trusted friend.

- Such a trust was regarded as one of the most sacred things in life, and the friend was bound by honor to return the money intact.
- It is the very word Jesus used when He said, “*Father, into Your hands I **commit** My spirit*” Luke 23:46.

When Christians **commit their souls to Him**, they leave their souls in a safe place. God is **a faithful Creator**, and we can give ourselves to Him knowing it is safe to be in His hands.

“Faithful Creator:”

Much of the agony we put ourselves through in times of trial and suffering has to do with our disregard of God’s faithfulness or of His place as Creator.

He *is* our sovereign **Creator**, with the right to do with us as He pleases.

Yet He *is* **faithful** and will only do what is ultimately best for us.