

## 1 Peter 4B

[1Pet. 4:12](#) ¶ Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

[1Pet. 4:13](#) but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

[1Pet. 4:14](#) If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

[1Pet. 4:15](#) Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

[1Pet. 4:16](#) but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

- In this passage, Peter teaches a number of principles associated with suffering
  - First, in verse 12 Peter says the Christian should not be surprised when we encounter trials
    - Persecution or physical abuse or even martyrdom should not be a surprise to us
    - He even adds a hint of sarcasm here when he says that it is not as if some strange thing is happening when these trials come upon us
  - We know he is addressing this to Christians by the clear way he introduces the section
    - He calls his readers Beloved
  - And he says they should not be surprised by the trials among them
    - And to be more specific, they are fiery trials
    - This is an interesting word in Greek
      - The word is purosos, which means burning to refine or purify
      - The word seems to describe not only the purpose of the trial – to purify and refine them

- But also to describe the very nature of the trial
  - These were events that were ongoing
  - They were among these believers already
- And since we know of Nero's persecution of Christians in Peter's day by burning them at the stake or on poles
  - Then it seems reasonable to conclude that his choice of words may have been intended to invoke a thought of those events
- How can Peter say this?
  - Don't act surprised if people want to burn you at the stake for your belief?
    - Don't act like something strange is happening
  - What does acting surprised mean?
    - How would you act if the government began to break down your front door and drag you off to prison or to the death row for your faith
      - Would you be surprised?
      - Of course you would?
    - In part, you would be surprised because it would be so unexpected in a culture with so many protections for individual rights
      - It would seem so surprising because we live in a country where the rule of law is so firmly established
      - Because we live in a culture that is largely pluralistic toward religion, where men have great freedom to practice their own religious faith
  - Do you realize I just described not only the United States, but also the Roman Empire
    - The Romans observed an extensive system of law that provided for many protections of individual liberty and for the rule of law

- Roman citizens and even subjects of the realm were protected from abuses of power and false accusation
- And although the Caesar's power was virtually unchecked, the local administrators were required to follow law and order in prosecuting criminals
- Furthermore, the Roman culture took a pluralistic view of religion
  - To be more accurate, Roman religious culture practices syncretism which is the blending of religions into a single worldview
- In that kind of culture, it would have been very surprising to see a sudden uprising against an otherwise peaceful and law abiding group of citizens in the way Nero orchestrated events against the Christians
  - No doubt they were surprised, and you and I need to appreciate that they were no less surprised than we would be if a soldier burst through our door right now
- So Peter is talking to us right now, and he's saying don't be surprised by a fiery ordeal, acting as if it's a strange thing
  - Persecution is not a strange thing but rather a common thing, at least when viewed from the perspective of history
    - And even today, many Christians around the world experience immense persecution
  - Persecution is not unusual
- The second principle Peter teaches in verse 13 is that suffering means we are identifying with Christ in His suffering
  - And that such an identification includes the opportunity to suffer with Him in His glory
    - Said another way, if we have been targeted by the enemy for such treatment, it is proof that he sees us as his enemy
      - And if the devil acknowledges us as his enemy, then it is further encouragement for us to know we are a child of God

- And as such, we will have not only the privilege of suffering as Christ did
- But we will also share in His glory, for our suffering is nothing more than a brief prelude to an eternal glory
- It's much like childbirth, in the sense that if a woman must share in the pain of the experience,
  - Then at least she can take comfort in the knowing that her pain is brief
  - And once it ends, she will experience the joy of a new child
    - And that joy will stay with her the rest of her life, or at least until the child is two
- This is how it is for us as we suffer in trials
  - We have the blessing of an assurance of a coming glory with Christ and a chance to share in His joy
- Peter confirms the blessedness of persecution in verse 14 with his third point
  - He says that when we are reviled for Jesus sake, we are blessed
    - The word for reviled literally means insulted verbally
  - So when people insult us because we believe in Christ, consider it a blessing
    - And Peter clarifies what he means by that paradoxical truth by explaining that the Spirit of Glory and of God rest upon us
    - What does it mean that we have the Holy Spirit rest on us and in us?
  - Consider the following scripture verses

[Rom. 8:14](#) For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are **sons of God**

[Rom. 8:16](#) The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

[1John 3:1](#) ¶ See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

- When we have the Spirit, we are made the children of God
  - And that Spirit not only makes us a child of God, it testifies that we are a child of God
  - And when the Spirit rests upon us, it is the Spirit of Glory, the Shechinah glory of God shining to the world through our lives
  - And when the world sees that glory, and that we are children of God, the enemy is enraged and rejects us just as it rejected Christ
    - And as Peter just said, we can consider ourselves blessed when we are persecuted because it becomes additional confirmation that we are His children
- Now in case any of us or any of Peter's readers were tempted to take this rule and reverse it
  - Peter quickly adds verse 15
  - He says we should make sure we are suffering as a murderer, thief, evildoer, or a troublesome meddler
    - Well I was doing pretty good there until he mentioned that last one
    - And actually that last word just means a general troublemaker
      - Allotriepiskopos – one who meddles in things that are alien to his calling
  - You see, we can't take this principle and reverse it
    - Even though a believer can take encouragement in suffering for Christ as proof of their faith
    - Not all suffering is proof of our faith, and therefore not all suffering is a blessing
      - Suffering for doing the wrong thing is suffering we deserve and we can take no pleasure in it
      - And we certainly shouldn't seek after it
- But following this aside, Peter returns to conclude his point in verse 16

- If anyone suffers as a Christian, he should not be ashamed but glorify God
  - The irony of this verse is found in the way Peter uses the term Christian
  - It's actually a rare term in NT writing
    - It's only found here and twice in the NT
  - In general it's not a complimentary term in Peter's day
    - It is a derogatory term used by unbelievers to describe Christians
    - It means a little Christ, and in that sense it is intended to identify believers with an executed criminal, but only less significant still
- That's why Peter says that we should not be ashamed at the title, because in his day believers were often ashamed to be identified with Christ in that way
  - Don't be ashamed to be identified closely with your Lord, even when your enemies use such terms to insult you
  - Rather count it as reason to glorify God
    - Imagine how this would have played out in their experience
    - Imagine men and women walking to synagogue to worship their Messiah
  - And as they pass through the city streets, their Jewish family and friends turn on them and mock them calling them Christian,
    - Which literally means a Christ follower, a little Christ
    - And where before the sound of those words might have wounded their pride and hurt their feelings
      - Now they remember Peter's words and glorify god
      - Thanking God that they might be blessed to be counted among those who know the Lord

[1Pet. 4:17](#) For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

[1Pet. 4:18](#) AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?

[1Pet. 4:19](#) Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

- Verse 17 introduces Peter's next principle of suffering
  - The word for at the beginning of this section alerts us that there is a conclusion or application to be made
    - For judgment begins with the household of the God
    - Who is this household?
    - Peter says it is us
    - It begins first with us
  - What does that means?
    - Don't believers escape judgment?
- Peter has said already that we are to identify with Christ in our suffering for His name sake
  - And these trials produce a testing of our faith
  - And through our obedience in the faith of trials we imitate Christ by bringing glory to the Father through our obedience
    - Trials bring testing
    - Testing of faith brings an opportunity for obedience
    - Obedience brings glory to God
  - So God's judgment is seen in that He brings about the suffering of the church to our own benefit and to His glory,
    - And yet this is difficult
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- Paul describes this same principle in his letter to the church in Thessolonica

[2Th. 1:3](#) ¶ We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater;

[2Th. 1:4](#) therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

[2Th. 1:5](#) *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

[2Th. 1:6](#) For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

[2Th. 1:7](#) and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

[2Th. 1:8](#) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

[2Th. 1:9](#) These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

[2Th. 1:10](#) when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

[2Th. 1:11](#) To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,

[2Th. 1:12](#) so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

- Their faith was greatly enlarged and their love for one another grew
  - Why? Because of their perseverance and faith in the midst of persecutions
  - And those persecutions were a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that they could be considered worthy of God's kingdom
    - Not that they were earning that worth
    - But rather that their opportunity to participate in these sufferings was proof in itself they were counted worthy by God's grace
  - And then Paul says it is only just for God to repay those who persecute the church with afflictions
    - While giving relief to those who are afflicted for their faith

- But did you notice when that recompense is to be paid?
  - We received our suffering in judgment while on earth
  - The unbeliever will receive their suffering in an eternal judgment
  - Similarly, we receive our relief in the form of eternal glory with Christ
- That's what Peter means when he argues from the lesser to the greater in verse 17
  - What will be the outcome for those who receive their judgment after Christ's return? Terrible indeed
- For if the righteous suffer this much for the sake of God's glory
  - How much do you think He's prepared to make the unrighteous suffer for their sin and offense against Him?
- Which is why in verse 19 Peter can make his profound conclusion
  - Those of us who have been ordained to suffer for doing what's right
    - For believing in Christ
    - For being a child of God
    - For showing His light in this dark world
  - If we are appointed to suffer for those good reasons, then we must also be prepared to trust God to know what's He's doing in the process
    - We entrust our souls to this God and we don't second guess His judgment
    - We don't demand answers to the difficult questions of life before we obey
  - We don't question God's motives when we witness suffering nor do we waiver in our trust that He is at work on His throne bringing all things to good for the sake of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose
- Rather, we trust and we obey and we rejoice
  - Are you prepared to do this? You may be called to do it sooner than you ever imagined