

The Books of 1 and 2 Peter

Lesson 8: Sharing in Christ's Sufferings -- 1 Peter 4:12-19

When something hard hits us, our first thought is almost always, why is this happening to me? There is an instinct, deep and almost universal, to feel that suffering is a mistake, an interruption, a sign that something has gone wrong with the universe or with God. Peter knows that instinct, and he gently corrects it. "Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you." Suffering is not strange for a Christian. It is not a detour off the path. Sometimes it is the path.

Peter is writing to people facing real fire, not metaphorical inconvenience but genuine persecution for the name of Christ. And he asks them to do something that sounds almost impossible: to rejoice. Not to grit their teeth and endure, but to "rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings." He wants them to see their pain through an entirely different lens. To suffer for the name of Christ is not to be abandoned by Him; it is to be drawn into fellowship with Him, to walk where He walked, and to be marked out as one who belongs to Him. "If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

But Peter is careful, and we should be too. He draws a clear line between suffering for Christ and suffering for our own foolishness. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler." Not all hardship is holy. Some of it we bring on ourselves, and that kind calls for repentance, not rejoicing. The suffering Peter celebrates is the suffering that comes precisely because we belong to Jesus and refuse to deny Him. That kind, he says, is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a name to glorify God in.

And then Peter lifts our eyes to the end of the story. Judgment begins with the household of God; God refines His own people first. The righteous are scarcely saved, saved through fire, not by ease. So what do we do in the meantime, when the flames are real and the outcome feels uncertain? Peter gives one of the most beautiful instructions in all of Scripture: "Let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." Entrust your soul. Keep doing good. Read this passage if you are in the fire right now, and let Peter teach you how to burn without being consumed.

Group Discussion: Peter tells believers not to be "surprised at the fiery trial" as though "something strange were happening" (v. 12). Why do we so often assume that suffering means something has gone wrong, and how might it change a person to expect trials as a normal part of following Christ rather than an exception?

Personal Reflection: Peter says to "entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good" (v. 19). What would it look like for you, in the hardest thing you are carrying right now, to actually entrust your soul to God and keep doing good rather than giving in to fear or bitterness?

Read 1 Peter 4:12–19

Study Questions

1. Peter says, “Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (v. 12). What does this teach about how a Christian should expect and interpret suffering, and why is it important not to see trials as “strange”?
2. Be honest about your own reaction to hardship. When trials come, do you tend to feel that God has abandoned you or made a mistake? How would expecting trials as part of following Christ change the way you face the next one?
3. Peter says to “rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (v. 13). How can a Christian genuinely rejoice in suffering, and what does it mean that our suffering for Christ is actually a sharing in His sufferings?
4. Peter says, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed.” Where have you experienced even small insults or rejection for following Jesus, and how does Peter’s perspective reframe those moments?
5. Peter draws a sharp line: suffer for the name of Christ, but “let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler” (vv. 15–16). Why is it so important to distinguish suffering for righteousness from suffering we bring on ourselves, and how can we tell the difference honestly?
6. Peter says that if you suffer “as a Christian,” you should “not be ashamed, but glorify God in that name” (v. 16). Is there an area where you feel quietly ashamed of being identified with Christ? What would it look like to glorify God in that very situation instead?
7. Peter says, “It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God,” and asks what the outcome will be for those who do not obey the gospel (vv. 17–18). What does it mean that judgment “begins” with God’s own people, and what does this teach about God’s purifying work in the church and the seriousness of obeying the gospel?
8. Peter says “the righteous is scarcely saved” (v. 18), and elsewhere that we are saved through fire rather than around it. Where are you tempted to expect the Christian life to be easy or comfortable, and how does the reality of being “saved through fire” reshape your expectations?
9. Peter concludes, “Let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (v. 19). What does it mean to “entrust” your soul to God, why does Peter call Him a “faithful Creator,” and how does continuing to “do good” fit together with entrusting ourselves to God in the middle of suffering?
10. Look back across the whole passage. Peter moves from not being surprised by trials, to rejoicing in shared suffering, to suffering rightly, to judgment beginning with God’s people, to entrusting our souls to a faithful Creator. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through these verses. What single truth from 1 Peter 4:12–19 do you most need to carry into this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 8:16–18, suffering with Christ so as to be glorified with Him; Matthew 5:10–12, blessed are those persecuted for righteousness' sake; Acts 5:41, the apostles rejoicing to suffer dishonor for the name; 2 Corinthians 4:7–18, the light, momentary affliction preparing an eternal weight of glory; Job 13:15, though He slay me, I will hope in Him