

A STUDY OF 1 PETER

Suffering for Christ (1 Peter 4:12-19)

1 Peter 4:11 ends with the word “Amen” and verse 12 begins with “Beloved.” These markers tell us that a new section is beginning, though Peter really reinforces much of the teaching he has already covered. Peter’s personal relationship is seen in his address of the Christians as “Beloved” just as he addressed them in 1 Peter 2:11.

1. Why is it that Christians should not be surprised by trials?
2. Why are the trials called “fiery?” (See also 1 Peter 1:6)



3. What does John 15:18-21 teach and how is this related to 1 Peter 4:12-19?
4. How is a Christian able to view persecution positively? (See James 1:2-4)

Charles Spurgeon looked back upon dark hours in his life and said: “I bear willing witness that I owe more to the fire, and the hammer, and the file, than to anything else in my Lord’s workshop. I sometimes question whether I have ever learned anything except through the rod. When my schoolroom is darkened, I see most.”¹ David said in Psalm 119:67, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word” and four verses later in verse 71 he reflected, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.”

5. Why were the Israelites tested in the wilderness? (Deuteronomy 8:2)

The Gentile Christians to whom Peter is writing had never experienced persecution prior to coming to Christ. They were at home in their cities and lived as a normal part of the society. After coming to Christ, they are no longer viewed as mainstream by those who lived around them. Now they are subject to isolation and hostility. Peter says to them that this is to be expected and is not strange.²

Christians today find themselves in the same situation as Peter’s first readers. Before coming to Christ we “fit-in” in this world, but after coming to Christ the world views us as strange.

¹ <http://preacherstudy.com/premium/problems.html>

² Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com. p. 90.

Peter had said previously in 1 Peter 4:4 that those outside of Christ are surprised when the Christian will no longer engage in behaviour that is immoral and filled with the abuse of alcohol and a lack of self-control.

Peter continues by telling these brothers and sisters that they should rejoice in their suffering because they are sharing in the sufferings of Christ. This suffering allows the Christian to identify with Christ and show unity with him.³ Just as fire refines precious metals, these Christians are proving their faith to be genuine and are growing stronger in Christ.

Rejoicing in suffering allows for the Christian to ultimately “rejoice and be glad” when the glory of Christ is revealed. The NIV translates verse 13 in this way, “*But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*” The idea is that while a Christian will rejoice in suffering now and much greater and fuller rejoicing is anticipated.

6. Define the word “rejoice.”

In Acts 5:17ff the apostles are arrested and put into prison. During the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors to the prison and released them. Later the apostles are brought before the council and questioned by the high priest. After presenting the message of the death, burial, and resurrection they are beaten, warned and released. Acts 5:41 says, “*Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*” Christians ought to rejoice when they are able to suffer for Christ.

7. Could it be that if we are not suffering for Christ, we have not been counted worthy to suffer? Explain your answer.

8. What does Jesus teach in Matthew 5:11-12?

Let’s define the word “blessed” in this way: “receiving the favour of God.” While the world insults the Christian because of their faith, God blesses or bestows his favour upon the one who is persecuted for Christ. This blessing comes because the “*Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*” While every Christian has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), it seems that those who are persecuted may receive special strength from him.

Reasons to View Persecution Positively 1 Peter 4:12-19

1. It provides testing which proves the genuineness of our faith (v. 12)
2. It allows the Christian to share in Christ’s sufferings (v. 13)
3. Persecution helps prepare the Christians for eternal glory (v. 13)
4. Insult for Christ brings blessing. (v. 14)
5. The Holy Spirit rests on the persecuted.
6. When suffering as a Christian, we bring glory to God.
7. The suffering of the Christian is temporary while the lost face eternal punishment.

³ Davids, Peter H. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle of Peter*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990. (Kindle edition).



9. What negative reasons why a person might suffer does Peter list?

10. What is a “meddler” and why is this such a serious sin?

11. What does it mean to be ashamed? (v. 16) What kinds of things bring shame?

The name “*Christian*” is used only three times in the New Testament and was first used in Antioch in Acts 11:26. Some will persecute the Christian simply for wearing this name; however this suffering is in no way shameful.

12. Why does the name “Christian” sometimes stir people to animosity and persecution?

In verse 17, Christians are called the “*household of God*” which is a descriptive phrase used to refer to the church. The suffering and persecution that these Christians were enduring was a type of judgment. This judgment showed their faith to be genuine as they continued to live faithfully for Christ in the face of these trials. Still, persecution is difficult; so much so that it is called a “*fiery trial*.” It is so difficult that the righteous is scarcely saved.

By contrast those who never obey the gospel are in a precarious position before God and will ultimately find themselves cut off from God in hell for eternity. The Christian faces suffering now while the non-Christian faces punishment in the future. The Christians suffering is mild in comparison to what those outside of Christ will experience.

In verse 18, Peter probably has in mind Proverbs 11:31 which says: “*If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!*” Verse 18 is stressing the fact that Christians are a saved people, but they go through great difficulty and persecution while on this earth. Those who refuse to obey the gospel are forever lost and their suffering will be far greater. In view of persecution and judgment, Christians must entrust their souls to “*a faithful Creator*.”

13. What is the meaning of the word “entrust” in verse 19 and what benefits come to the one who entrusts his soul to God?

14. How does one go about entrusting his soul to God?

15. Why is it important that Peter refers to God as Creator in verse 19?