

Lesson 22 – The Fiery Trial

1 Peter 4:12-19, “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. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

The hostility towards Christians these days is on the rise, which makes this text of scripture even more pertinent to our lives than maybe it has ever been before. The Christians back when Peter wrote to them were quite surprised at the persecution that they endured for naming the name of Christ. Knowing that they had left lives of sinful pursuit to follow to one true God, they perhaps concluded that their lives would be filled with God’s blessing and that things may simply work out for their earthly good at every opportunity. A false hope like that is certainly alive and well today in the false gospel of the health, wealth and prosperity movement. Such a promise has never been the case, in fact, Jesus Himself was quite clear for His followers to expect just the opposite of earthly treatment. He said in John 15:18, **“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”** The apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12, **“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”** The apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:13, **“Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.”** For a Christian, living as a light in a dark world bring about suffering. Christ was the light that came into the world, John 3:19-21, **“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”** If the world hated the light of Christ, and we imitate Christ, why would the world love us? Our following of Christ will come at the great cost of our reputation, our relationships, or success, and even our lives. Jesus said in Matthew 10:38-39, **“And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”** Jesus likewise said in John 12:24-26, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”** There is a cost of discipleship, it will cost you everything. Knowing that people should not jump into following Him before taking everything into full consideration, Jesus said this in Luke 14:28-33, **“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other**

is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple”

With that as a way of introduction to this lesson, let us remember our call to suffering as we enter into our text in 1 Peter. The first word in our text is “beloved”. We shouldn’t skip over inspired words in scripture, it would be easy to gloss over this first word and jump right into the meat of the sentence. I think we can all remember a word of endearment from someone special in our lives. Whether it was a parent or a grandparent, or your spouse, or perhaps your pastor or a teacher, we can all think back to the warmth that we felt when they would address us with that word. Maybe it was the word “Sweetheart”, or “Dear”, or “Darling”. I remember when I was a little boy, my mother used to say “Hey you” to me all the time. It really made me feel special... 😊 All jokes aside, there is an emotion behind Peter’s choice of the word “beloved”. He cares about these people. There is a warmth, a compassion, a tenderness towards them. They are going through a time of suffering and persecution, and it’s about to get worse for them, and so Peter wants them to feel the spiritual hug that he is giving them at this time. He wants them to know that he is with them and for them, and he also wants them to remember that the suffering that they’re going through is in God’s control and according to His will for their lives. Peter doesn’t want them to misinterpret this suffering as an act of God’s judgment.

Peter goes on to tell them therefore not to be surprised at the suffering coming their way as though it were something strange. There is always what we can observe going on at the surface level of things, and then there is what the Lord has going on behind the scenes too. As finite and often short-sighted beings, our lack of wisdom and perspective robs us of all the good that the Lord can bring out of our season of suffering. So therefore Peter encourages the believers to not think of their trials as something that is out of character, or inappropriate in response to their obedience to Christ. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, **“For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?”** There is a duality of effect in our lives amongst those who observe us, both our brothers and sister, and our detractors, who watch us suffer. In one act of suffering we can encourage both the believer and unbeliever alike to trust in Christ as they watch how we faithfully endure suffering. People will hate us because of the message we proclaim, they will hate us because we dare to enter into the lives and lovingly call them to repent, they will hate us for all of the activities that we will not do, and they will hate us for all of the activities that we do. This suffering ought to be expected. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, **“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.”** Paul said one chapter later in 3:12, **“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”** Not some believers, not most believers, not simply the most devout believers, but all who desire will be persecuted. This sort of language is called “How to Not Build Up Your Church Attendance” in 2024. This language sounds so difficult, it almost makes it sounds like not many will actually be saved in the end. It reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14, **“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”**

Peter encourages the believers to not be surprised at “the fiery trial” that will come upon them. This language certainly helps to portray a long and painful physical experience that will come upon them as they suffer for Christ. The imagery here is reminiscent of Malachi 3:1-3, **“Behold, I send my messenger,**

and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD."

Occasionally we sing the hymn "God's Refining Fire", and while we sing that hymn we ask the Lord this: *"O Lord we pray Thy will be done, or Master here am I. We pray You'd do a mighty work, that to the flesh we'd die. And when the answer comes to us in form of trial and test, we fail to see Your loving hand, refining fire is best. That I may stand when You appear, abide 'til Your return. O place the fire perfectly, that all the dross be burned. Whether furnace of affliction Lord, or unfulfilled desire, bring forth a vessel pure and tried by Your refining fire. God's refining fire! God's refining fire! May it purge me now and make of me what You require. O Lord feed the fire, Your refining fire. Now as gold and silver must be tried, Lord may my heart be purified. Lord send your great refining fire!"* I've seen to look on the faces of mature believers as they sing this hymn with joy, asking the Lord to bring fire into their lives, the exact opposite of what you'd ever expect someone to ask for! The mature believer understand the will of God, and submits to His sovereign plan to make and mature us into the image of His Son through controlled events that enter into our life to do so. While it is certainly possible for the Lord to instantaneously create us into the image of Christ, that is not the means that He has chosen to mature His saints.

There is a multi-faceted purpose for the fiery trials that enter into our lives. Yes, they certainly refine us. I've never met a person whose testimony for Christ was just remarkable, whose testimony was this, *"You know, I thank you for your kind words about my spiritual maturity, but I honestly don't know how it happened? I was born into a great family, and everything has gone my way and worked out for me in life! God has seemed to abundantly bless everything I've ever desired."* I've never met that person. The people that we admire in the faith (those people who we emulate as they emulate Christ), those are the people whose lives have been through the fire over and over again for Christ. No one writes or book or directs a movie about a person who's coasted through a cushy life. This leads me to a second purpose for our fiery trials, not just our refining, but our testing. Let's read a lengthier passage from [James 1:2-12](#). Our trials reveal the genuineness of our faith, not to God because He already knows our heart, but to others, and ourselves. Paul talks about the effect of our trials in Romans 5:3-5, **"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 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's look also at [2 Corinthians 1:3-11](#). Our trials prepare our hearts, they allow us to be stretched and pulled, they allow us to be comforted our God who walks beside us through the trial, and it prepares us to comfort and minister to our brothers and sisters who will talk through their own trials. Our trials in that sense are for others who watch us suffer well. When they watch us suffer and seek to glorify the name of Christ in that suffering, it encourages them to do the same when they suffer. Our desire to glorify God in and through our suffering (which comes only from the indwelling Holy Spirit) displays the authenticity and genuineness of our faith.

This suffering happens to every single believer. Do you remember the parable of the soils? How certain seeds were planted on the rocky soil? There was no depth in the soil, so the scorching sun killed the

plant. There's nothing wrong with the sun, the problem was in the soil. The same sun shines down on the seed in the good soil too, except the heat was used to help the plant to grow and produce much fruit. Therefore, it's not exceptional to see a believer go through heat, it's necessary for fruit-bearing. This is why 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."** We've all been there, haven't we? "What's happening?" "What is going on here?" We say those things when we forget that the Lord is in control of our trials. Nothing is up to chance and random circumstance. Everything that comes into our lives is by the design and for the purpose of God's will in our lives. Hebrews 12:5-12, **"And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.' It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees."**

We therefore should not be surprised by trials when they come upon us, instead, we should grow in concern if they never did. Rather than be surprised by trials when they come, we should grow in expectation that they will. Next in our text, Peter encourages us to actually rejoice when trials arrive, 1 Peter 4:13-14, **"But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."**

There seems to be correlation in those verses between our suffering in this life for the name of Christ, and the eternal reward that is awaiting us. We can see a varying degree of rewards in scripture, we most certainly will not all be rewarded equally. If we pay attention to the word "insofar", it has to do with a rejoicing that matches the level of suffering. Then, Peter connects the level of rejoicing through suffering, with the level of rejoicing in glory. And finally, Peter attaches a blessing to those who rejoice in suffering here in this life. Jesus spoke of our reward in Heaven for our suffering in Luke 6:22-23, **"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets."**

In verse 13, Peter next writes about us "shar[ing] Christ's sufferings". For us to share in the sufferings of Christ obviously does mean to make our suffering equal to His. We're not atoning for our sins, or anyone else's when we suffer for His name. What it does mean for us to share in Christ's suffering is that we will suffer for the righteous words and deeds that the Holy Spirit will empower us to do. As we follow Him, we will be led into the same suffering as Christ. Christ promised us that we would suffer for being His disciple in John 15:20, **"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."**

Our rejoicing through our suffering ought to be linked to our great hope, the imminent return of Christ, and then we will rejoice when His glory is revealed. Let us read together [Revelation 19:11-16](#). I am what nerds would call a “sports person”, and I have seen my team score that huge touchdown. I have seen my team make the game winning tackle that ushered us into the National Championship game for the first time in history, and I can still feel the emotion that rushed into me caused me to scream out loud with joy in the moment. That feeling pales in comparison to the imagery of us, arrayed in fine white linen, following Christ on white horses as He returns in His glory to rule. There ought to be a joy in our hearts unlike all other joy at the thought of the second coming of Christ! The word that our ESV uses is “be glad”, but perhaps that misses the full-orbed meaning of the word, which brings about an emotion of exultation! Think about Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, as he recollects the massive amount of suffering that he endured for the name of Christ, and he likened it in the end to a light, momentary affliction. Paul linked the suffering that we endure to what will be revealed when Christ returns, and take note of the language that he uses, **“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”** Can you feel the weight of emotion from Paul as he looks forward to glory?

As we turn our attention ahead now to verse 14, Peter says, **“If you are insulted for the name of Christ.”** It’s important that we remember that people are not against us, they are against Him. Certainly, we can add sin into the mix, and people can be against us for sinful words and deeds, but here Peter is talking about the insults that come upon us because of the name of Christ. Exactly like today, people shrink back at the hearing of His name. There is such opposition against Christ in this world that people don’t want to anything to do with Him. In the early church, the name of Christ was synonymous with salvation. Peter said in Acts 4:12, **“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** That’s an exclusive message. The apostles were clear in their message that Jesus alone saves, which offended all who heard the message apart from the Holy Spirit drawing them to Christ. In the very next chapter of Acts, in 5:41-42, **“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”** In Acts chapter 9, Christ tells Ananias of Damascus concerning the conversion of Saul in verses 15-16, **“Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”** If we follow Christ and preach His name, should we expect anything different?

Peter says that we will be insulted for the name of Christ in our text. Certainly our Lord experienced insults and mockery. Even on the cross, Jesus was insulted by the ones who were crucified alongside of Him! How deep is your hatred of Christ that you’d spend your last words in this life to insult His name?! This is the heart of the people against Jesus, they hate His name, and they will do whatever is necessary to stop others from hearing it. They will begin with insults and slander, and they will move on to acts of violence even to deter people from proclaiming the name of Christ. We see this in [Acts 17:1-7](#).

Peter links a blessing to those that are insulted for the name of Christ, and that blessing is both in the present moment, and also in eternity. We see that at the end of verse 14, **“You are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”** As saints this side of the cross, we are already Holy Spirit indwelt, so it’s not like our suffering is what causes the Spirit to rest upon us, He’s already there.

Romans 8:9, **“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.”** Peter therefore isn’t promising the presence of the already indwelt Holy Spirit, he is promising a measure of comfort and relief to those who suffer, from the Spirit of God. Peter calls it the “Spirit of glory”, glory is the very definition of God. When we think of the glory of God, we ought to recall the Shekinah glory, which symbolized the presence of God on the Earth in the OT. We see this clearly in the closing words of the book of Exodus in 40:34-38. Later in OT, when the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were brought to Solomon’s newly dedicated temple, in 1 Kings 8:11, **“the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”** In the same way as the Spirit of God dwelt in the tabernacle and temple, He now fills the hearts of NT believers. As believers in Christ, we have been purchased by God, therefore we are owned and occupied by Him. 1 Corinthians 6:19, **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.”** Peter goes on to say that we are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us. Rest can mean a variety of things, but the meaning in particular in this verse has to do with relief, the idea of being refreshed or relieved after enduring a bout of suffering. Jesus offers rest to all those who are weary and heavy laden in Matthew 11:28-29. The indwelling Holy Spirit resting upon us gives us grace by imparting to us the necessary endurance, understanding, and remainder of the fruit of the Spirit as we suffer in this life. Galatians 5:22-23, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”**

A perfect example of the Spirit indwelt comfort in someone going through suffering is the life of Stephen, the church’s first recorded martyr. In Acts chapters 6 and 7, we read of his seizing and being brought before the council. Surely, the life of Stephen hung in the balance as he spoke his next words. Can you imagine the emotion that would come upon you in that moment? Follower of Christ or not, what would it feel like to know that the very next words that you utter will most definitely bring about the excruciating pain of stoning and then death. We don’t have to wonder how Stephen was doing emotionally at this moment, we’re given a glimpse at how he was perceived by all in Acts 6:15, **“And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”** In that moment, Stephen was already comforted by the Holy Spirit, he was already being ministered too by the Spirit of glory, and so he preached to the council in Acts chapter 7 about Jesus Christ, the perfect God-Man, the One that they murdered on the cross. As those who held the law of God in the hands, they should have been cut to the heart as Stephen spoke. They should have fallen to their knees in brokenness and repentance over their murderous and blasphemous act, and yet they grew all the more angry. As the tension ramps up, notice the Spirit of God comforting Stephen, Acts 7:54-56, **“Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”** By that time, the enraged mob had already tuned out Stephen, they came upon him forcefully and drug him out of the city to stone him immediately. They laid him at the feet of a young man named Saul, and they begin to stone him. At that moment of climaxed pain and emotion, the Spirit is still actively at work in comforting Stephen, who is still interested in ministering to those who are in the process of killing him. Acts 7:59-60, **“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”** While we all certainly hope to never endure a tortuous death for our faith in Christ, we can rest assured that the Spirit of God will bring comfort and

rest to our spirit as we go through that final trial. It makes us connect with the very same Saul who stoned Stephen in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, **“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”**

A few pages ago, I spoke about how our sin can add suffering into our lives. Sin always damages, it always separates. So when suffering comes into our lives, it is important that we evaluate why we are suffering at that moment. Was it Christ in us that brought about this persecution? Or was it our words and actions done out of impatience, anger, frustration, maybe even fear that caused the persecution? Peter is set to address this in the next section of our text in 1 Peter 4:15-18, **“But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”**

The relief that Peter was just teaching about from the Holy Spirit rests upon those who suffer for the name of Christ. Obviously, anyone who murders someone, or steals from someone else, ought to be punished appropriately for those crimes. In some of the most heinous of murderous crimes, the penalty is even death upon those individuals. Society expects suffering to come upon guilty criminals, anything short of a long incarceration would be a breach of justice. As we consider the ability for a sin to be forgiven at the cross, God is certainly able and willing to forgive a repentant murderer or thief who trusts in Christ’s finished salvific work, but that’s not the heart of what Peter is after here. He is saying that there is no rest from the Spirit of glory that is upon a person who is suffering for their crimes, that temporal suffering is appropriate, much the same way that a murderer who trusts in Christ while in prison is not immediately pardoned and released. Peter goes on to generalize this principle to all evildoers in verse 15. Peter starts with those obvious examples but then applies the standard to all evil done everywhere, no one ought to expect any rest or comfort from the Spirit while they suffer the consequences for the evil that they’ve done. But Peter goes even one step further and includes even meddlers in verse 15. At this point Peter moves from the arena of crimes, down to the arena of sinful thoughts and deeds. Even those sinful words that you’ve spoken are going to forfeit the comfort and rest of the Holy Spirit as you suffer for your sin. What is meddling? Simply put, it’s being engaged in an activity that you have no business being engaged in. If you’re tasked to be over here by your boss accomplishing this business, and he finds you over there doing the exact opposite of what you were told to do, you’re meddling. We’re not called to lead uncontrolled lives, we’re called to lead disciplined, obedient lives. Consider 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, **“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.”** Live quietly, mind your own affairs, work with your hands, do as you’re told, so that you may walk properly before outsiders. If you meddle and live outside of those boundaries, you shouldn’t expect the comfort and rest of God. Hear what Paul says in his next letter in 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12, **“For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such**

persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.”

Much like a track and field runner, or a swimmer, Christians are prescribed a lane to be in, and need to operate their lives within that lane. It is not helpful, nor should we expect a reward, to be actively causing trouble in society, agitating and stirring up the dust with people wherever they go. Paul describes the life that all believers should live in 1 Timothy 2:1-4, **“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** Paul gave further instruction in Titus 3:1-5. If we ought to live quiet lives and avoid quarrelling, then certainly it would be wrong to ever point out sin in people’s lives and call them to repentance, wouldn’t it?! Wouldn’t you have to be loud, and willing to quarrel, in order to point out sin to others? Not at all! That kind of attitude is the very one that Peter is arguing against in our text. Believer can, and must (in fact are commanded to) make and also mature people into the image of Christ. You cannot impact the game from the sideline, it’s necessary that you move, and coach has put you in the game.

Peter continues in verse 16, **“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian.”** Now Peter gets to the matter of the suffering that comes upon the Christian who is operating within the confines of their prescribed lane, and the certain and promised suffering that Christ spoke about has come upon them. Peter says that when that suffering comes upon us, we are not to **“be ashamed”**, but we are to **“glorify God in that name.”** What’s most interesting about verse 16 and would be completely overlooked by someone had it not been pointed out, is the name **“Christian”**. We know ourselves to be Christians, but it’s interesting to note that they didn’t refer to themselves as Christians in the first century. If you read through the book of Acts, notice the words that are used to describe fellow believers. Believers referred to themselves as brothers (and sisters by extension) most prominently. We see that theology of adoption at work as each individual believer recognized how they were brought out of a life of sinful separation from God, and were saved into His family and made sons of God, and therefore brothers and sisters with each other. If you pay attention in many other places throughout the book of Acts, you’ll notice that believers refer to each other as **“saints”** quite often. In our modern day, the world around us confuses the terms ‘saints’ as ‘angels’. The world also confuses the word ‘holy’ to refer to a perfect and serene being. Believers in that day were not thinking of themselves as those who ranked high above the mass of sinful society and were giving themselves pet names from the angelic domain. The word ‘saint’ literally refers to one who is in the process of ‘sanctification’, that long process of becoming less and less sinful everyday as we repent, and more and more like Jesus everyday as we follow Him. If you also pay attention as you read through the book of Acts, you’ll notice that when believers refer to themselves as a whole, they gave themselves the title of those belonging to **“the Way”**. There are many examples of this, but here is one where we read of Saul seeking out believers so that he could imprison and murder them, Acts 9:1-2, **“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”** This name the believers gave themselves came from the words of Jesus in John 14:6, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Knowing that there no other name by which men could be saved (Acts 4:12), believers therefore belonged to ‘the Way’. But the word

'Christian' that Peter mentions in verse 16 was at this time in history a derogatory word, it was intended to be an insult. The name simply means 'little Christ' and spoke of the frustration of the world who now had to deal with little Christ's on the heel of extinguishing the leader. The name Christian was the name that was hurled upon believers as they were first persecuted and martyred for their obedience to Christ. Borne out of that first season of persecution, believers adopted the name and have used it ever since.

Peter says that were not to be ashamed to suffer for Christ name. It's not a failure on our part if our life's reach with the gospel is inhibited because of our imprisonment for Christ, or if our life is even cut short. It is a privilege and an honour that we have to suffer for His name. Suffering is a great help for us to reorient our thinking on Christ. The more that localized believers have had to deal with the real danger of instant persecution, the more the church has flourished and been purified. When true believers are living a life of obedience to Christ out of a motive of love for Him, regardless of the temporal earthly consequences that it will bring, that is a blessed perspective set upon Heavenly reward.

Peter writes in verse 17, **"For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God."** When Peter writes 'time', he's talking about the context of the persecution that they are going through. It's helpful for us to distinguish that Peter is not marking a point in the chronology of human history, but an event. It's like how we would say, "We had a great time last night!" 'Time' pointed back to an event. Or, "She had cereal six times this week." Peter starts verse 17 with the word **"for"** which helps us to connect verse 17 within the paragraph of thought that it's in. 'For' it is time for judgment. As you might have guessed, there are many different words that we could translate into the English word 'judgment'. Peter clearly conveys the truth in this verse that there will be different outcomes for those who are in Christ and those who are outside of Christ when judgment is passed. I don't want to unpack our final lesson in 1 Peter together, but we can see in passing the nature of God's judgment upon believers in their present suffering, 1 Peter 5:9-10, **"Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."** This judgment from God is the nature of judgment that an earthly father would have on their child. An earthly father doesn't let their child get away with sin, but will set boundaries, correct and rebuke their child, and ultimately work to mature them. We see that picture here in the family unit that God created, but it's just a shadow of His perfect work as our Father. He is always at work to rebuke and correct us but is also cleansing us and shaping us all the way until glory. 1 Corinthians 11:32, **"But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world."** There is never a threat that a true believer will somehow use up God's patience and face eternal condemnation in the end. Romans 8:1, **"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."**

Peter says that this judgment begins at the 'household' of God, which I think plainly refers to all of those who have been called into God's family. He then contrasts what the outcome will be then for those who are judged outside of God's family. It will be the opposite of Romans 8:1, there will be condemnation for those who are outside of Christ Jesus. We read of this judgement at the Great White Throne in [Revelation 20:11-15](#). There is a definitive number of people who will be thrown into the lake of fire, and it is all those whose names were not found written in the book of life. There are two sides of the judgment, and only those covered in Christ will be spared, much like those who painted their doorposts with the blood of a spotless lamb, much like those who were in the safety of the ark, God has provided a way of escape from His coming wrath. God will judge His own in the here and now, and at some point in

the very near future, He will judge those who reject Him with a devastating blow. It is infinitely better that we live through this time of judgment now where God is using it for our good and His glory, than to be under the eternal judgment and wrath of God to come.

Peter quotes a variation of Proverbs 11:31 in verse 18, **“And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”** There is room for gross misinterpretation of the text if we’re not careful here. It’s always important to clarify scripture and build a consistent biblical theology by comparing what the Bible says, to what the Bible says. The Bible cannot contradict itself. At face value, it can be concluded that only a scarce amount of God’s people will finally be saved. This verse is not referring to the efficiency of Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice of His life for our salvation on the cross. Jesus didn’t die so that only a scarce amount of people who trust in Him for righteous are actually saved. The meaning of this verse is in reference to the many hardships and difficulties that the righteous in Christ will go through in this life. And if God is causing those that He loves, those that are His, to go through such hardships and difficulties, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?! Paul understood that living for Christ would result in a difficult life, but he did not shy away because Christ was worthy. Acts 14:19-22, **“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”**

All sin must be punished. Jesus Christ, the sinless God-Man, lived a life of great hardship and difficulty. He experienced the sinfulness of man upon Himself. He was mocked, insulted, scorned, beaten, and murdered. He suffered the ultimate price of death so that we would rise victorious from the sting of death and live with Him in eternal glory. If Christ’s life was full of difficulty, and we’re promised to live a life of great difficulty, why would the ungodly expect anything less? Many of the ungodly sinners in this world profess a belief in God. They believe God to be the Creator and Judge. They believe in a real Heaven and Hell. They believe God to be the forgiver of sins. And they live their life carefree as they bank on the eternal riches of Christ to forgive them of all of their sins someday. They desire to live a life of comfort and ease and pleasure, and then they want to live their eternity the exact same way. Why would the ungodly draw that conclusion when the life of Christ, and the lives of millions of Christians throughout history teach otherwise? The answer is foolishness. You cannot exchange the truths of God’s word for fanciful lies about God’s character, that’s idolatry. The judgment coming upon the ungodly is one that is infinitely greater and more severe than those who are in Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9, **“This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”**

The final verse of this lesson (and this chapter) is verse 19, **“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”** To some, knowing that their

suffering for Christ is according to the will of God might be a hindrance, as they wrongly conclude that God may be against them. Peter's aim is to comfort and encourage us to know that our Lord is sovereign and is perfectly aware of the trials and suffering that we're going through. Peter encourages us to entrust our souls to our faithful Creator. To 'entrust' someone means something more specific than trusting, it's trusting someone to perform a specific task. The root of the word is financial in nature, as a person entrusts the bank to hold their funds in a secure place. In this sense, we take great comfort to know our souls are safe in the hands of God, and regardless of what may happen to our physical bodies in our earthly suffering, nothing can damage our soul. Jesus modeled this entrusting in His final words before giving up His life on the cross for us, Luke 23:46, **"Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last."** We're encouraged to entrust our souls to God because He is faithful, but Peter also calls Him the Creator, the only time in the NT that God is called that. Know that Peter's word choice is not accidental. Taking this moment to reflect on God being the Creator allows us to think about His power, and wisdom, and intelligence, and sovereignty. If He is strong enough to not only think about creating something, but actually controlling all the elements in the universe to bring it into being, how should He not be trusted to care for us while we're suffering in our own little life?

Let us close our lesson by being reminded of the life of David, the man after God's own heart. Many believers in Christ have suffered and entrusted their souls to their faithful Creator as they did so, but certainly all of them have drawn comfort from the example of David in [Psalm 31](#). I can think of no better words to close this lesson.