

1 Peter 4:12-19 – Part A

As we begin this morning, what we will be studying is a kind of brief overview of [1 Peter 4:12-19](#). This is an extremely critical passage that certainly has many implications for us today. This may be one of the most relevant passages for a believer in all of the New Testament based on many of the things that we are witnessing worldwide. As your pastor and because of my conviction regarding the sovereignty of God, I am not an alarmist or someone who just wants to strike fear in your hearts because of current events. I am not spiritually built that way. To the contrary, I want to be able to recognize the conflicts that may be forthcoming and try as best as possible to be prepared spiritually, emotionally, and physically rather than just be surprised when they come and totally unprepared. This is one of those passages that must be taken seriously even though it was written nearly 2000 years ago in a completely different cultural setting. Its relevancy for today cannot be understated, and if you are serious about your Christian life, you will recognize that simple reality.

It is extremely critical when studying any passage to understand anything unusual or different about the passage, and [1 Peter 4](#), and especially v12-19 have a very unique biblical identifier to them. What makes it unique is that the word “**suffer**” is used more in [1 Peter 4](#) than any other chapter in the Bible, and more than most books of the Bible – both Old and New Testament. The entirety of the Old Testament only uses the word “**suffer**” or another of its various forms eleven (11) times – eleven times, and the word is not even used in the Book of Job! [1 Peter](#) alone uses the word thirteen times (13) and five (5) of those times are here in [1 Peter 4:12-19](#). That is very significant. I.e., there is no other chapter in the Bible that speaks specifically about suffering for Christ as much as [1 Peter 4](#). If somehow in our study of this chapter we overlook and simply miss that reality, then in actuality we will never glean all that it is trying to communicate to us. The challenge that we are embarking on in v12-19 is whether or not we are and will be willing to suffer for Christ. In America, this idea of suffering for Christ is virtually unknown and certainly not preached on very often. Of these 19 verses, v1-6 are addressing the idea of suffering, as well as v12-19. In fact, the first word of v1 is “**Therefore**” and points us back to [1 Peter 3:18-22](#) which speaks about the suffering of Christ. Notice v1 and what it says,

1Pe 4:1 (NKJV) Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

Now, what Peter says in v1 is that everyone of us are to “**arm ourselves with the same mind**” that Christ had regarding suffering. If Christ had to make a choice between obeying the will of His Father or not suffering, He chose obeying the will of His Father every single time. Disobeying God the Father was never even an option. The word for “**arm**” is the word “*hoplizo*” and means to arm yourself with weapons that can protect you.¹ However, the weapons spoken of here are not physical weapons, but mental weapons – having a certain mindset, thinking a certain way. Somewhere in your life and sometime in your life, you have to make a very, very real decision as to whether or not you actually and truly are willing to suffer for Christ and for His name’s sake. You personally cannot escape this reality and this call to godliness that is placed on every believer who has ever been a part of God’s kingdom.

¹ Zodhiates, *hoplizo*, 1051.

I think of a missionary like C.T. Studd who went to some of the deepest parts of Africa, but he was mentally prepared to suffer and to even lose his life. Many pastors in places like Pakistan, Indonesia, and China are in constant danger every day of losing their lives, but the difference for them is that they know that and are mentally and spiritually prepared to suffer for the name of Christ even if it costs both them and their families their lives – which it very often does.. [Philippians 1:29](#) says something very similar and reinforces this idea that it is actually an honor to suffer for Christ – maybe one of the highest honors possible.

Php 1:29 (NKJV) For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

I.e., Christ has actually “**granted**” you this privilege – the privilege “**to suffer for His sake**”. We enjoy great freedoms in America, but in reality we are the exception as compared to most other places in the world where Christianity is abhorred and hated and Christians are constantly being persecuted and martyred for their faith. I hope you do clearly understand that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world. More Christians die for their faith every year than any other religion. – but our liberal fake news media certainly sees that of no concern as they continue to berate and belittle Christian values at every level possible.

When the word for “**suffer**” is used in [1 Peter](#), it is always referring to that which is very painful both physically and emotionally. It carries the idea that the believer is being specifically subjected to that which is very evil, and it creates tremendous levels of personal hardship both on them and their families. Now, that is very, very important as we begin this new section. Why is that? It is because we know that people suffer greatly through tornadoes, hurricanes, automobile wrecks, cancer, earthquakes, tsunamis, and wars. However, this word for “**suffer**” is not addressing any of that, but is speaking specifically of those sufferings, those trials, and those persecutions that are inflicted on someone specifically for their identification with Christ. That is a crucial element that cannot be overlooked in this exegesis and study. Let me say it a different way so there is no mistake about what we are addressing. The problem that we have created in Christianity is that we have made salvation to be an event. If you were to ask someone about their salvation, they would most likely tell you when they were saved. However, even though everyone who is saved is saved at a certain point in time, the New Testament does not primarily associate salvation with an isolated event, but with actually following Christ as the person’s way of life. We all know people who have made spiritual decisions, but those decisions never impacted their life. If you personally choose to live a godly life, in all likelihood you will experience more suffering because of it.

In America you are “currently” protected by laws of religious freedom, but trust me, that may quickly change over the next decade and what religious freedoms you deem precious today may be utterly gone in the next several years. We are only one administration away from this taking place. As we get closer to the end and many of our Christian rights and freedoms are slowly being eroded, Christians will become the target of various kinds of hatred, persecution, and even martyrdom. The church will become just another part of the great apostasy and falling away that awaits the lead up to the Tribulation and Great Tribulation. The conviction level of many Christians today is nominal at best and trust me, but their obvious lack of deep convictions regarding Christ will not be able to weather the potential suffering that may encounter. Listen very carefully. If you personally wait until the actual persecution or suffering happens to become mentally, emotionally, and spiritually prepared to accept it in a way that honors

Christ, it will be much too late. You will not have a chance because your mindset will be one doing everything possible to protect yourself from the persecution and suffering. Having a mindset and spiritual perspective that desires for the honor of Christ to govern and control a person's entire life is not something that just exists. There is no "great spiritual Christian" switch you can just turn on and spiritually activate at will – never. This kind of mindset has to be developed in the person's mind and heart and in their will long before suffering ever comes – and every single one of us need to know that and to have that mindset being developed in our life right now today.

Now, as we enter into [1 Peter 4:12-19](#), this is the most significant passage on the believer's willingness to suffer for Christ found in the New Testament. I say that, because it is like the crowning climax to the entire book of [1 Peter](#) with its focus on suffering for the sake of Christ. I have mentioned this previously, but Peter's audience did not know the persecution that was just around the corner after Nero's rage in 64AD. Most theologians place [1 Peter](#) as being written and circulated between 62-63AD. It is not sure that Peter knew about the coming persecution, but he certainly understood that it could be very close. That is why he wrote in v12,

1Pe 4:12 (NKJV) **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;**

Now the NKJV that I just read does not really bring out how this sentence should be better translated. The ESV says it the best when it reads,

1Pe 4:12 (ESV) **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.**

Young's Literal Translation reads,

1Pe 4:12 (YLT) **Beloved, think it not strange at the fiery suffering among you that is coming to try you, as if a strange thing were happening to you,**

These incredibly intense and severe trials were just around the corner for many Christians who were already suffering. What is important to appreciate is that in the ESV the words "**do not be surprised**" and "**comes**" are both in the present tense which simply indicates that the trials were already happening to these believers. If you are here today, young or old, and you do not appreciate that suffering and persecution may very well be just around the corner, then you are very naïve and probably somewhat foolish in your perspective. As your pastor, I am not an alarmist, but I very much am a realist, and no matter where we are on God's timetable for the end times, we certainly know that we are getting closer with every passing year.

In v13, to the modern mind, Peter almost seems to have lost his mind when he tells these Christians to actually "**rejoice**" because they will be suffering. Notice what he says,

1Pe 4:13 (NKJV) **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.**

It seems like an actual contradiction of terms, an oxymoron, something completely illogical –"rejoice that you will most likely be suffering very shortly". Who wants to hear that, who wants to think about that? Well, in the Laodicean church age, no one does. That is a fact! However, look at v14.

1Pe 4:14 (NKJV) 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.

Peter's encouragement in v14 is that when the believer is “**reproached for the name of Christ**” that the Spirit of God actually rests on them. The word “**reproached**” means to be defamed and to be reviled, and to be railed at with abusive words.² This same word is used by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 5:11](#) when He says,

Mt 5:11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

It is a word that means to be railed at, to be chided, to be taunted by someone.³ This is not a nice word. this is not sitting down for a cup of tea with someone for a pleasant conversation relative to differences. This is ugly – being snarled at, grinding the teeth at you, reviling you, insulting you, scorning you, abusing you whenever possible, despising you, censuring you, condemning you, and berating you. This is a very strong word that is a precursor to severe persecution and suffering. This is when people hate you because of your faith in Christ. This is not just suffering some form of physical suffering, but very much entails both verbal and emotional abuse. I just hate it when I hear parents berating and speaking down to their children, but that is nothing compared to this. Peter calls this in v12 as a “**fiery trial**” which is just one word in the Greek – “*pyrosis*”. It comes from the word “*puroo*” which means to ignite something, like igniting a fire.⁴ It means to simply be on fire, and metaphorically represents some very severe testing that was going to be their lot in life.

Now, on the surface, to the uncommitted Christian that may sound like the most unpleasant of events that could happen to them – emotional, verbal, and even physical suffering and abuse. Who in their right mind would ever want something like that? This is the kind of passage and the kind of forthcoming messages that makes the uncommitted believer very uncomfortable, very skeptical, almost cynical. Most people like that have already turned off the live streaming and checked this off as of no meaningful value. However, in the context of this passage, Peter is skillfully making the case that this is the real test that authenticates true believers. It is how they actually respond to the “**fiery trials**” which are coming upon them that authenticate the reality and the validity and the strength of their personal Christian faith. You will never ever know what kind of real Christian faith that you have until it has been severely tested. The “**fiery trials**” that God allow in our life are there to prove us, to test us, and to refine us. They are inevitable and certain. Now, I know that is not what you want me to say to you, but I have no choice if you are truly interested in the truth and where you may actually be spiritually and in your relationship to Jesus and to God the Father. [Psalm 66:10](#) says,

Ps 66:10 (NKJV) For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.

Now, I want you to notice v17 and what it says,

1Pe 4:17 (NKJV) 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?

² Zodhiates, *oneidizo*, 1047.

³ Strong, *oneidizo*, #3679, ep.

⁴ Strong, *pyrosis*, #4451, ep.

Let us start at the end of this passage and see if we can answer the question Peter addresses when he says **“what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”** What will be their end? Well, it will not be good, at least we know that. Anytime a preacher uses the word “repent” or repentance”, it seems that he is being too judgmental, too oppressive. The last impression that I want to leave with a lost person is that they have a voice in the final outcome. God the Father is the deciding factor and not the unbeliever. If the unbeliever refuses to come to Christ on God the Father’s terms, then eternal judgment is inevitable. The sinner must repent of his or her sins or perish in those sins. If you want your sins actually forgiven, then faith in Christ as evidenced by true repentance is the choice you must make. I do not want to ever soften the message to the point that you would feel comfortable in your sins against God, and especially in your unbelief. When the Jews in [Acts 2](#) asked Peter what they must do to be saved, he did not give them a soft, non-confrontational answer.⁵ Listen to what he said to their question in [Acts 2:38](#).

Ac 2:38 (NKJV) **Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

The first part of v17 aims at the church, at believers, and this is what it says – **“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...”** Without going into the exegesis of this passage, the meaning of this verse is really very simple and clear. God chastens, disciplines, cleanses, and tests His people now and in this life., but His future judgment of the lost will be infinitely more devastating. It is much better to endure godly suffering now than to bear eternal judgment and torment later because of a hard heart that was never willing to listen to the clear teaching of the Scriptures on salvation.⁶

Peter’s final encouragement is in v19 which says,

1Pe 4:19 (NKJV) **Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.**

His encouragement is for you as a believer to simply **“commit”** your life to Christ in doing that which is good. The word **“commit”** is an imperative mood verb in the present tense which simply means that committing yourself to your heavenly Father is to be a continuous part of your life. It is that kind of enduring mindset that will actually strengthens you for the very difficult moments that you will inevitably face in your life. I would simply say to *“just do what is right, just do what you know to be the right thing to do”* and let God take care of your life. He is a faithful and sovereign Creator and will never disappoint you with how He manages both your life and your future.

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⁵ Allen, 183-184.

⁶ MacArthur, 256.

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