

1 Peter 4:12-19 – Part B

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; ¹³ 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 is really somewhat odd how perplexed and how mystified we often become when difficult and uncomfortable trials come our way. It is almost as if we do not think that the trials are justifiable or even reasonable to be happening to us personally. If God is such a big God and such an omnipotent God, then why does not He just overrule and override the trials? At times, it seems like it would just make life so much easier and so much more enjoyable than to always be experiencing very difficult and trying moments in our life – and especially when our God is more than able to rescind those difficulties and inconveniences. Well, all of that may be what we personally want, but life simply is not like that at all. To the contrary, trials, struggles, temptations, hardships, troubles, and even suffering are a part of the normal course of the Christian life, and to not understand that simple reality will leave every single one of us constantly bewildered and confused. Listen to just a few verses on the reality of tribulations in the Christian life.

Mk 4:17 (NKJV) and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

Jn 16:33 (NKJV) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Ro 5:3 (NKJV) And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

Ro 8:35 (NKJV) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Ro 12:12 (NKJV) rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

2Co 1:4 (NKJV) who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

1Pe 1:6 (NKJV) In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

It would be spiritually naïve to think that we can live the Christian life without conflict and with trials. To say it another way, it is all very normal and should be somewhat expected if we are truly followers of Christ. In the verses that we just read, what the Scriptures revealed is several truths. Trials are a direct by-product in a believer's life because of the Word of God and our faith in it. Paul says that trials produce spiritual endurance and stamina in the believer – a kind of spiritual persistence and stamina that is needed if you are truly going to follow Christ. He says that we must learn to be patient in the struggle and to actually count it a joyous reality that we may be going through a spiritual difficulty. Peter himself does not deny that the trials the believer may experience will be very grievous and very painful at times. Listen to just a few verses on "suffering".

Ro 8:18 (NKJV) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

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,

Php 4:12 (NKJV) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

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.

That last verse is very clear that there is a suffering that is exactly what God wants us to experience. It says that it is “**according to the will of God**”. So what is the point? Well, the point is really very simple – you are not to “**think it strange**” when very difficult trials come into your life. In fact, almost as speaking an oxymoron, Peter says that we are to actually “**rejoice**” in v13. The word for “**think it strange**” is the single Greek word “*xenizo*” and it literally means to not be surprised or astonished by something that is happening to you because of your faith in Christ.¹ The NASB, ESV, NIV, HCSB, ISV, and RSV all translate it as “**do not be surprised**” – which is the better translation.. I.e., do not be shocked or alarmed or frightened when you begin to experience these trials. However, is not that exactly what happens? We fall into what **James 1** calls “**various trials**”, and those trials seem to confuse us, to exasperate us, and even to make us angry. **James 1:2-4** says it this way,

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

The word “**various**” means diverse, manifold, variegated, many colored.² I.e., these trials and these struggles come in all kinds of way. They are so varied, so wide ranging, and can be so different from one another. It can be struggles in your marriage or your workplace. It can be trials with your co-workers. It can be a physical illness or some accident in which you were involved. It can be financial struggles, or meaningless irritations that seem to just annoy you. It can be life threatening trials. So, when some of these “**various trials**” begin to trouble your life, the normal tendency is to complain and question God and the end result is a very spiritually debilitating perspective that almost cripples your Christian life.

I.e., when these trials and struggles and difficulties actually overtake you and burden you in some way, God simply wants you to realize that they are just a normal part of His way of creating His character in your life. God the Father never one time asked God the Son if He would like an easier way of accomplishing your redemption – not one time. If I understand the Scriptures clearly, He never gave God the Son another option involving an easier way. God the Son clearly understood before time even began what it was that God the Father wanted Him to do, and He fully accepted it as being the perfect will for His life. **Hebrews 5:8** says it this way,

¹ Zodhiates, *xenizo*, 1022.

² Zodhiates, *poikilos*, 1191.

Heb 5:8 (NKJV) though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Jesus knew exactly what awaited Him, and He never one time wavered in His resolve to allow God the Father's pre-ordained trials and sufferings to interfere with His personal obedience to the will of His Father. No wonder Jesus could encourage us in [Matthew 11:29](#) when He said,

Mt 11:29 (NKJV) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Do you want rest for your soul? Do you want to be at peace in the midst of the struggle and the trial? Do you want to understand obedience at a much deeper level? Then learn from Jesus, learn from what He knew to be the perfect will for His life and you will “**find rest for your soul**”. There are so many people who are just restless about anything and everything. It seems that everything in life is an issue for them, a struggle and an inconvenience and a trial about which they are incessantly complaining. It is as if they have never accepted how God works and are almost bitter towards Him for the trials. That is a very bad place to find your life. Listen very carefully. If you really and genuinely want to be like Jesus, if that is what you truly and genuinely desire for your life, then you must understand how He works through the trials and afflictions and struggles that He is going to allow into your life. Stated another way, these trials, which Peter says are actually “**fiery**” at times, are spiritually unavoidable and inescapable, but they are exactly what will produce the character of Christ in your life. If you do not understand that spiritual reality, then you will find yourself constantly complaining every time that some trial finds its way into your life. You will find yourself criticizing and murmuring and protesting the very work of God in your life that you so desperately need to be conformed to the image of Christ, and your spiritual growth will be severely stunted and curtailed. I love how [Hebrews 10:35-36](#) states this reality when it declares,

Heb 10:35 (NKJV) Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

There are so many Christians who literally have no endurance. They see every trial, every struggle, every issue as a terrible inconvenience and awful nuisance to their life, and with that mindset they are constantly destroying the very work of Christ in their life. There may be some temptations in your life that just seem unbearable at times, but they are a normal part of the Christian life, of the spiritual battle that is inescapable for a committed follower of Jesus. Listen to [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) and [James 1:12](#),

1Co 10:13 (NKJV) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Jas 1:12 (NKJV) Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

The more you complain, protest, grumble, whine, and find fault in the actual work of God in your life, the less of His life transforming work you will experience. The more you find yourself complaining and whining about those struggles that invariably come into your life, the more distant you will personally become from God. However, the opposite is also true. The more that you accept His dealings in your

life, the more at peace you will find yourself with Him, and the more confident you will become in His work in your life, and the greater influence and impact your Christian life will have on other people. Please appreciate that the more you recognize how God actually works in your life, then the much easier it will be to cooperate with Him in that work. The principle is really very simple – what you believe determines how you behave.³ This is being mentally prepared because the spiritual principle is that if you are not mentally prepared to accept what God allows in your life, the enemy will quickly defuse your faithfulness to the things of God. It is the idea that if you think wrong, if you think that what God is doing in your life through a trial is bad, then the less inclined you will be to cooperate with Him. Listen to the other ways that Peter has stressed this in this letter,

1Pe 1:13 (NKJV) Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1Pe 4:7 (NKJV) But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

1Pe 5:8 (NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

There is no substitute for being mentally prepared, mentally strong, mentally resilient – no substitute. The less prepared you are mentally, the greater will be your struggles. The trials will overtake you and rather than building you up, they will make you bitter, angry, and destroy your resolve to become what God wants you to become. Here is exactly what Peter is saying – “Stop being caught off guard by your trials”. They are not strange, they are not abnormal, they are not mysterious. To the contrary, they are very normal for your Christian life. When Jesus called Paul on the road to Damascus, He spoke to Ananias about what He was going to do with Paul, and this is what He said in Acts 9:16,

Ac 9:16 (NKJV) For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Paul fully understood this and wrote in [2 Corinthians 4:7-12](#),

2Co 4:7 (NKJV) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death is working in us, but life in you.

Now, why make such a big deal about this? Well, it is because the verb for “**think it not strange**” or “**do not be surprised**” is not only in the present tense, but it is also in the imperative mood. I.e., it is an actual command and carries a strong weight to it. It is the verb tense that is meant to get your attention and is simply one of God’s ways of emphasizing exactly what He wants us to do and how He wants you to think. This is Peter’s way of saying to yield and to surrender to God’s perfect will for your life. For these believers, this was what Peter referred to as “**the fiery trial**” (v12) – the “*pyrosis*”, the burning,

³ Precept, *1 Peter 4:12*, ep.

the suffering, the trial by fire, the refining fire. This is literally a trial by means of fire, a refining fire that burns away the chaff in your life, the fire that confronts you and refines your Christian character.⁴ This is not referring to some discomfort in your life or some kind of inconvenience or annoyance that kind of gets on your nerves – not at all. That is not what this is addressing. This is the strong, inevitable refining fire of God in your life that will burn away all of the chaff that you are clinging on to in your life. This is not enjoyable, this is not pleasant, but in the end it produces in you exactly what Jesus sets out to accomplish in your life. [Hebrews 12:11](#) says it this way,

Heb 12:11 (NKJV) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The word “**painful**” is the Greek word “*lype*” and refers to that which causes grief and sorrow and heaviness. It can signify pain in the mind or in the body.⁵ It is the kind of painful experience that always leaves a lasting impression, but one that God uses to change us, to refine us. If I can say it this way, it is a good pain, a trial by fire. [1 Peter 4:12](#) says that this trial is to “**try you**”. However, most of the other translations are much better than the NKJV because it says that these trials are there to “**test you**” (ESV). The word “test” is “*peirasmos*”, and when God is the agent for testing as here, the purpose is to prove someone and never for the purpose of causing them to fall. It is always a test to prove our spiritual character⁶ When the enemy tempts you, it is always for the purpose of making you fall, making you fail – always, every time!

So, what does Peter tell us to do? In v13 he simply says to “**rejoice**”. How strange is that to the average Christian – rejoice when you are going through a trial by fire? Yet that is exactly what Peter says to do. Listen very carefully. If I had some spiritual formula for being able to bypass trials, I would never give it to you. Why? It is because your trials create within you the resolve and the capacity to endure and persevere in them.⁷ Your trials strengthen your Christian life and make you much more useful to God the Father. So, if you will treat your trials as your friend and not your enemy, you will be much better off in your life.

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⁴ Harris, *purosis*, #4309, ep.

⁵ Vine, *lype*, #3077, ep.

⁶ Zodhiates, *peirasmos*, 1135.

⁷ Precept, *1 Peter 4:12*, ep.