

1 Peter 4:19 – Part L

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.

As we come to [1 Peter 4:19](#), this is the next to the last verse in this epistle regarding suffering. The last verse on suffering is in [1 Peter 5:10](#) and says the following,

1Pe 5:10 (NKJV) But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

It should be clear to us by this point in the study that for the committed believer that suffering may become a normal part of their life. However, I want to ask you a very simple, yet what I consider to be a defining question. It is a difficult question that in my mind only has one answer. The question is simple – “*If you had to choose between remaining obedient and faithful to Christ or saving your own life, which one would you choose?*” Which one is more important to you? If life brought you to a point where you had to choose between Christ and the preservation of your own physical life, which one would you choose? I have one simple statement to make at this point. Right now, today, this moment in this place, if you are not willing to be obedient to those things that you know that God is convicting you to be obedient in, then you would never choose obedience over your own life. Why do we know that? It is because you are not willing to do it now when it is relatively easy. That is where this message is ultimately going to lead us.

[1 Peter 4:19](#) starts with the word “**therefore**” – a word that always makes us look back at what has previously been said. Notice what Peter has previously said about suffering in this chapter alone.

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,

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.

¹⁴ **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.**

1Pe 4:16 (NKJV) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Now the simple reality that we want to take from these passages is that **suffering for your personal faith in Christ, even to the point of death, is a part of God's will for your life**. If you do not see that, if you do not accept that, if you do not believe that, then chances are very high that when God does allow and sovereignly ordains actual suffering in your life that you most likely will quickly fall away from the faith. Listen very carefully. What you believe now is what will ultimately govern your life later. What convictions you have now will dictate how you respond to trials, and pain, and suffering in the future. If you are not settled now about how you will respond to the pain and discomfort of suffering when it begins to happen, then in all likelihood you will find ways to avoid it and it may even be that you would deny the faith to protect yourself from the suffering. Many religious, church going people will do exactly that. It is called the great apostasy and it will take place – maybe in our lifetime.

This past week, Eddie Ildefonso was challenged by the Catholic Church in Cusco, Peru to a debate with the priest there on the perpetual virginity of the virgin Mary. It was a very calculated move on the part of the Catholic Church to discredit Eddie in order to have him permanently removed from the country. Eddie knew this was coming. He knew that this would happen. This is what he wrote to us after the debate about what happened,

“Well, I did not make a lot of friends. I used the Bible and the priest used church decrees. At the end the priest was not gracious, but very upset. He could not substantiate his position biblically. His assistant informed me that I was being put on notice with immigration. I told him that I would not be threatened under any circumstances.

The priest could not sustain his position biblically. The rule was to provide a biblical presentation and he proceeded to provide a Roman Catholic church decree presentation. I simply took the Roman Catholic bible and demonstrated that there was no biblical justification for their teaching. The priest was furious because he had no idea I was going to use his own bible. From the Roman Catholic position a church decree is equal to the bible. So, I merely asked him to show us a chapter and verse in his own bible that makes that claim. He could not!”

This past Thursday we had the McVey’s, the Winks, and the Davis’ over to our home for a swimming party. MJ, James, John, and myself were in the pool with the kids just talking about the Christian life and MJ was sharing with us the foundational paradigm that they have in Indonesia that governs their ministry. It was as missionaries that they were to abide in Christ and that they had to have a humble heart and a willingness to die for Christ. They believed that without this willingness to die for Christ that they could never be faithful to their calling. They had to be willing to live as Christ lived, and He was fully willing to die in obedience to His Father’s will.

The word for “suffer” in v19 is “*pascho*” and it means primarily to suffer some kind of pain in your life that vexes your life, that deeply troubles you. It means to be affected by something that is outside of your life, outside of your personal control, and that someone else is acting on you and that you are being subjected to evil.¹ It refers to someone who is having to endure both evil and tribulation. Because it is in the present tense, it describes suffering as an actual lifestyle, something that should not be surprising to a believer who is fully committed to Christ. If you choose to live a righteous life before God, there is no doubt that at some point in your life that you will experience the pain of suffering for Christ.

[Philippians 1:29](#) says,

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,

God the Father sees it as a unique spiritual privilege “**to suffer for His sake**”. If God calls on you to actually suffer for His name’s sake, it will challenge you to a new commitment to Him and to His way of life² – one that is very, very different than the culture in which we live where we have everything. Suffering for Christ, suffering for the sake of the gospel, suffering for your faith – it is not something that should be unexpected in a world and a worldly system that is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-gospel. In fact, for us as believers, it most likely will be the norm very soon and will most likely happen within

¹ Zodhiates, *pascho*, 1127.

² Precept, *1 Peter 4:19*, ep.

our lifetime. We as believers in the church will become the primary target of persecution and suffering. In my mind as your pastor, ultimately this will be inevitable. The “good ole days” are gone.

As v19 says, there will be those times when we “**suffer according to the will of God**”. You cannot miss this statement. This verse clearly implies that suffering is something that God may often divinely ordain for our lives. It also implies that suffering according to the will of God is something to which we should readily submit our lives. Now as simple as that may sound, I can assure you that in the American church culture in which we live, this will become a deeply divisive issue among people who believe that God is their sugar daddy to prevent them from experiencing any kind of suffering. Between the name it and claim it groups, the health and wealth groups, the charismatic groups, and the Laodicean church age in which we live which sees itself as needing nothing, you can be assured that suffering is not a welcome topic for the vast majority of Christians – even ourselves. We must remember that the specific suffering that Peter is addressing is suffering because you are a fully devoted follower of Christ. It is because you are a Christian, it is because of the name of Christ. [1 Peter 4:14](#) says it this way,

1Pe 4:14 (NKJV) If you are reproached for the name of Christ....

For the committed Christian, it is an inevitable reality, and it will become even more of a reality “**as we see the Day approaching**” ([Hebrews 10:25](#)). Behind everything that happens in our life is the backdrop of God’s perfect will. Even when you as a Christian may be attacked in many different ways, you can be fully assured that God has your life under His sovereign control and care. Any suffering for the name of Christ that we may endure is in complete harmony with God’s will for our life – nothing less. It is that reality that strengthens us, that empowers us to be faithful. [Philippians 3:10](#),

Php 3:10 (NKJV) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

We must understand and accept that suffering is simply a reality that conforms us more and more to the image of Christ. [1 Peter 2:23](#) has been our foundational verse for this entire teaching in [1 Peter](#) and it says,

1Pe 2:23 (NKJV) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

That is exactly what our v19 says as well, that we “**commit our souls to Him in doing good**”. The two words for “**commit**” are different Greek words. The one in v19 is “*paratithemi*” but practically means the same thing – to entrust your life into the care of someone else. It actually is a banking term, like when you make a deposit into your bank account. You are entrusting your money into their care. In the same way, you are entrusting your life into God’s care, into His will, into His oversight of your life. It is the same word that Jesus uttered on the cross when he said in [Luke 23:46](#),

Lk 23:46 (NKJV) And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last.

Listen very carefully. It is solely an act of complete and utter faith on your part to entrust your life to God. Either you have or you have not. There is no middle ground here. You can be assured that God is always seeking to both test and refine your faith in Him. It is my firm belief that many professing believers in churches just like this one have never really entrusted their life to Christ. They made a

superficial decision in the past that they believe will keep them out of hell, but they have never really committed their life to Christ. They constantly waffle and waver in their obedience to the Word of God. They are simply casual and almost indifferent to biblical truth. They have no real heart for the Word of God. However, because they made some shallow, non-life transforming decision at some point in time, they feel comfortable that they are somehow exempt from obeying God's Word. They see it is optional and un compelling and have little to no evidence whatsoever of genuine biblical faith in their life.. That alone is a revealing sign of a potential lack of genuine salvation. They go to church, but really, that is about it for the most part. That is not a picture of spiritual life, but a vivid picture of a spiritual delusion that does not save.

I find it strengthening that v19 is the only place in the New Testament that God the Father is called the Creator God – the “**faithful Creator**”. The point is simple. You can trust the God who created the universe with a simple word and nothing else. He flung the stars into the sky. You can trust this God. You must believe, you must trust that God is able to keep you, even if it is unto death. My question would be that if you do not do that, then where else do you have to go? Would it be to trust in the government, your financial advisor, some ridiculous horoscope or palm reader, the advice of some ill-advised friend? Where will you go? If and when you suffer as a Christian, you can know that it is according to the perfect will of God that it is happening to you.

It is my opinion that when genuine persecution arises within the church, the first thing that will happen is that there will be a separation of the sheep from the goats. I think that we can easily see some of this beginning to happen. I was reading this week of a petition to remove Franklin Graham as president and CEO of Samaritan's Purse. It was started by a group called Faithful America, a so called left wing Christian activist group that is denouncing his prayer at the Republican National Convention. Who are the founders of this group? It is a group of Episcopal priests who want to stop his so called “hate speech” They called him a homophobic preacher because of his stance on certain moral issues and his support of the President. As the tensions that surround us arise, your faith will be tested. It is inevitable. November 2020 will not be a nice month no matter who wins. You may very well have friends and family that denounce you as being an arrogant self-righteous Bible thumper. What is all of this? It is simply suffering “**according to the will of God**”. [1 Peter 2:21](#) says,

1Pe 2:21 (NKJV) **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

Now, I want to make a statement that I believe is very important to this section of Scripture, so listen very carefully. It is where we began this message. **Our obedience and faithfulness to God is more important than preserving our own lives**. Preserving my life is not the highest goal for my life. When we die, we will be in the presence of God. We will die and go straight to heaven. That is a fact!. What is important is an obedience to God and a faithfulness to Him in all circumstances.³ That is much more important, but a reality that is certainly not readily accepted. Listen to what Paul said to the Ephesians elders in [Acts 20:22-24](#),

Ac 20:22 (NKJV) **And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and**

³ Grudem, 813.

tribulations await me. ²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul said the following in [Acts 21:13](#),

Ac 21:13 (NKJV) **Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."**

This is true discipleship, true Christianity and it is summed up in a willingness to die for your faith in Christ if that is what God allows. Faithfulness is much more important to God than personal preservation. Jesus said these words to the church of Smyrna in [Revelation 2:10](#),

Rev 2:10 (NKJV) **Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

The reality of what happened to the believers in the church at Smyrna may very well happen to us as well. This is the setting of the last days church age in which we live – either faithfulness or apostasy. [Revelation 12:11](#) says of the tribulation martyrs who had nothing but suffering to look forward to,

Rev 12:11 (NKJV) **And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.**

The truth of what we are addressing is really very simple. If you look around your life today and what composes what we would identify as traditional Christianity, the call to obedience simply does not seem that critical to most professing Christians. For many, the idea of obedience is totally optional. There is absolutely nothing optional about obedience to God and His Word – nothing, and if you think for one moment that it is, then you are sadly deceived and in my mind may not even be a genuine believer.

Here is the reality of what all of these Scriptures are saying to us. They are clearly saying that if we are genuinely willing to give up even our lives for faithfulness to Christ that we will find it much easier to give up everything else for the sake of Christ.⁴ The opposite is also true. If we are NOT willing to give up our lives for faithfulness to Christ, then we will NOT find it easy to give up other things for the sake of Christ. You have to think about this for a moment. If you look around at those professing believers who surround your life and you never see anything real about their profession, you can be assured that they will never be willing to give up their life for Christ when the really difficult persecutions and sufferings arise. How do you know that? It is because they are not willing to sacrifice anything for Him today. There is not a chance of that happening in their lives, and the ultimate reason may simply be that they have never even been saved. Religion is a deadly curse, but our culture thrives on religion. It thrives on attending church or having a morning prayer or reading a daily devotional, but deep, heartfelt commitment to Christ, now that is quite another thing.

The reality of the Christian faith is that many believers are living such shallow, superficial, compromising lives that they would be deeply embarrassed if you really knew what was going on in their lives – so they just keep playing at Christianity rather than having a heartfelt commitment to it.

⁴ Grudem, 813.

What if that is you? How can you know if that actually describes you? It is simple. Let me give you one simple question to answer, and it will reveal the depth and genuineness of your personal faith in Christ. Here is the question, so listen very carefully. “*Are there areas of your life right now that you know are displeasing to God, but that you are not willing to let go of or even address?*” If your honest answer is yes, there are areas of my life that I am not willing to submit to the Lordship of Christ over my life, then you are just playing at Christianity as if it is a game – which it is not. My prayer for you this morning is that you would embrace the biblical reality of [Philippians 4:13](#) which boldly declares,

Php 4:13 (NKJV) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

May today be the day that you make a decision to fully commit your life to the perfect will of God and rid your life of all of those things that are hindering God from using you for His glory. You will never regret making that decision.

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