

XLI. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in Exile
“Unsurprised – Part 2”
I Peter 4:12–19
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This is our second study of this paragraph in I Peter. We have one more study on it. This is the Word of God and it's the truth. I Peter 4:12–19 which says [12] *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. [13] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad **when** his glory is revealed. [14] If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. [15] But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. [16] Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. [17] 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? [18] And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” [19] Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Praise the Lord for all of the work of grace in your life and how He is working in your life. Sometime in the 1990s the pastoral staff came to me and said that it was about time for me to get somewhere near the 21st century. Apparently they were getting a lot of complaints that people could not get in touch with me the way other people were doing then so they bought me a personal computer (PC) and were going to set me up with an email account. The tech guy explained to me what email was and they asked me how I wanted it to appear. He said ‘Do you want it to appear on your screen highlighted from the sender or the date or the content?’ Being an expository preacher I knew how to answer that. I wanted it to appear from the name of the sender because then I would know how to read the email. So when I know who the author is I would know how to acknowledge the message or whether I'm going to read the email.

Here you have a letter from Peter to you and it's important as we're reading it to remember who it's from. The Holy Spirit equipped and empowered Peter to write this as the man. We are in a section of this letter that is focused upon Christian suffering 101. He is telling us why it's here, how to view it, what to do, how to encounter it and why it's in our life. In fact, Peter has consistently with the other New Testament writers taken their cues from Jesus in which Jesus has told us that suffering is not an element of life for the Christian but it is the inevitable experience of life for the Christian. Paul, Peter, James and Jude have all heard this from Jesus.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:11–12, [11] *“Blessed are you **when** others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Jesus said in John 15:18–21, [18] *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. [19] If you were of the world, the world would love you as its*

own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. [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. [21] But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me." Jesus said in John 16:33, [33] *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* The Disciples have heard all this and they repeat it in their epistles.

Paul says II Timothy 3:12, [12] *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Philippians 1:12 says [29] *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.* Jude, James and Peter say not to be surprised when, not if, the fiery trial comes upon you. We have learned that every true Christian at some time, in some way, to some degree will suffer for Christ's sake. So how do you view it?

One of the things I long for is that parents take seriously is the fact that we have to educate our children in the Lord. The Bible doesn't tell us what apparatus to use for that is between you and the Lord, but you want your children to develop a Christ-centered, Christian world and life view. How do you look at life? How do you see the creation? How do you see God's providence? How do you see suffering? This is what Peter is teaching us here.

Who is Peter? He is the man who was ashamed of Christ. He is the man, when tested, denied Him three times and it grieved him so much that he went away to his old fisherman habits of cursing. He was not only a man who so ashamed in the day of testing but he was a man who repented because Christ restored him. So that his affirmation and repentance could match his sin, Jesus gave him three times the question 'Do you love Me more than these?' Then Jesus commissioned him into his pastoral role. That commissioning was very clear—feed My lambs, tend My sheep, and feed My sheep (John 21). That's exactly what Peter does.

Now 30 plus years later Peter is in Rome writing a letter to believers who have likely written to him telling them of the Christian life in general with two epistles. The first one is likely written around 60 A.D. from Rome and the other written likely three to four years later and they cover the scope of the Christian life. Drawing from Old Testament imagery from the Exodus power and bondage of sin he tells them they are elect exiles. He gives 14 blessings of what it means to be the elect in Christ and the seven Gospel commands in which he now has an eighth Gospel command. So having told us who we are in Christ, he tells us why and how we live for Christ through his Gospel commands.

In the midst of this extended section on suffering that we have been in from I Peter 3:13 to I Peter 5:11, he has this pregnant paragraph on Christian suffering 101 which has an eighth Gospel command. The eighth command is do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you. In this paragraph we see how to view suffering *when* it comes in our life. Peter wants us to see it rightly and respond to it redemptively. Peter wants us to understand who God is, what He is doing and why it's there.

The first thing I want you to see from this paragraph is that Peter gives you your identity and he says two things about you. One is that you who are suffering for the name of Christ are beloved. Our tendency when something bad, difficult, grievous is happening in our life like suffering is to think God doesn't love us anymore, yet actually it's the opposite. This is an evidence of God's love. He heard this word from heaven at the baptism of Jesus, "this is My *beloved* Son in whom I am well pleased." After His baptism Jesus will go into the wilderness to be tried and tested by suffering for 40 days and 40 nights. Then a week before He leaves Galilee

to go to Jerusalem to suffer at the cross Peter, James and John will accompany Him up the sacred mountain.

Peter refers to this moment on the Mount of Transfiguration in II Peter 1. After he sees Jesus lifted up in glory with Moses and Elijah Peter wants to build a shrine and as Peter says ‘the Word from heaven came’ which said ‘this is My beloved Son, hear Him.’ Listen to Him. It is that word that if you are in Christ and Christ is in you then the Beloved Son declares that you are beloved. There is your identity—you are loved by God. You don’t deserve it. You didn’t seek it, but His relentless, redemptive love has sought you and secures you. You are beloved and this that you are going through is a part of the love of your God for you. You may not understand it. You don’t have to grin and bear it. There is something God is doing in a broken world in the midst of this in your life, but you are starting with the fact that you’re loved.

Secondly, you are starting with the fact that you’re blessed. I seem to encounter this when I’m with my African American brothers and sisters because when I ask them how they are they tend to response with ‘I’m blessed.’ I do encounter it a lot here at our church. Sometimes I get the response ‘better than I deserve.’ That’s called grace. Praise God if you have better than you deserve because you don’t want what you deserve. Praise God there is a God of mercy who withheld from you what you deserved and put it on His Son. There is a God of grace who took what His Son did and has given us what we don’t deserve, because what we do deserve has already been paid for by His Son therefore I’m not only beloved but I’m blessed.

You have been blessed, why? It is because when the fiery trial comes it is telling you that you belong to Him and He is all over you. It is not that He is all over you when the trial comes but He is all over you and that’s why the trial has come. I Peter 4:14 says *[14] If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.* When God sent His Son who was beloved and God sends Him into the wilderness to suffer and be tested, and sends Him to the cross to suffer for our salvation. At His baptism the Spirit of God was poured out upon Him and rested on Him. At the Mount of Transfiguration the Shekinah glory, the Spirit of glory rested upon Him. Peter calls you beloved and blessed and the trial wouldn’t be here if the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God did not rest upon you.

Peter could have said the Spirit of God is in you or with you and he would have been right but he is giving you the same picture from Jesus and the same Spirit that was upon Him has now been sent by Him to rest on you. You have been baptized with Him. You are anointed by Him. He is upon you and that’s why the trials are coming. If you didn’t have the Spirit of God upon you they would leave you alone. So the presence of the suffering is telling you God’s Spirit is upon you. So Peter gives us the identity of those who suffer for Christ and then in this paragraph he gives two instructions to those who suffer for Christ.

The first instruction is given in the negative and it’s an admonition. He says don’t be surprised when suffering comes. The reason we are not to be surprised is because this is our fare in this world until we get to heaven. Perhaps some of you don’t feel like you have suffered. If I’m telling you the truth, Peter’s telling you the truth and Jesus is telling you the truth and you’re not suffering then that either means one of three things. One you’re not a Christian. Two you’re not flying the flag, where you’re kind of one of His secret agents or three you are suffering and you just don’t know how much, what’s been said about you, or where it’s been said and what it cost you. You just don’t know it yet.

Perhaps a fourth could be in God’s grace, kindness, providence or whatever reason we have lived in a nation that has been blessed with two Gospel awakenings and the capital from that has provided a blink, a respite for us. There was a Great Awakening from 1735 to 1765 then

the second one was from about 1785 to 1880. We are still getting some of the blessings from that but the day of your applause for Christianity is gone. I remember when my oldest daughter was about 5 years old and we had gone to this place for dinner. We bowed in prayer as we got our meals and two different families said to us 'it's so wonderful to see you do that.' We're already in a time where at times when you say 'bless the Lord' and they tell you to shut up or they will put you in jail. There are places now where praying is off limits, even though we have a constitution that says it's supposed to be your first protected right. I'm not saying this to tell you how to vote, I'm just telling you that is coming.

There is coming a time that they will tell you not to talk about Jesus and are you going to do it? They told Peter and John that but that didn't stop them. They were called into the council and this is what it says in Acts 5:40–42, [40] *and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [41] Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. [42] And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.* They weren't going to compromise or back-off. They didn't act arrogantly or obnoxiously but they were going to be faithful to the name of Christ. Don't be surprised if the blink that has been around us continues to dissipate and erode. As it does what will we do?

I'm not sure it has been two years now but do you remember the 27 Ethiopians on the shores of the Mediterranean that lost their lives? They just found their bodies about a month or so ago that had been buried. They were killed in a horrendous way by Islamic terrorist and governmental religious terrorists. They also found the guy who gave the eye witness. We now know that right before they died they gave them the opportunity to deny Christ and convert and not one would do it.

Don't be surprised at the fiery trial, the licking flames. It may be mocking, reproaching but all of it has one aim and that is to make you ashamed so that you will be silent and no longer speak for Christ. When that aim comes you say 'no, I am not ashamed of the Gospel or of Christ who was not ashamed of me. He confesses me before the Father and I'll confess Him before men. God, send the Spirit who rests upon me to give me power and strength to do it in a way that honors you, with compassion and courage, conviction and consolation. Help me to do that Lord.' Peter is telling you to get ready and always be ready.

Don't be surprised because it has a purpose. God is trying you, testing you. He is not testing you to make you sin. He is doing it to show you where you are and where you can yet go in your Christian walk with Christ. The world is trying to destroy you but Jesus is sovereignly superintending all of it as He uses as a test in your life. It's like any other test. What does a test do? It shows you what you know, what you don't know and what you need to know. The test that God brings is not to punish you but in the midst of suffering for Him and His sake, it is showing you what you know, what you don't know and what you need to know.

Secondly, Peter gives you an exhortation by saying rejoice and be glad, because the Lord is at work in your life and this is the evidence that you belong to the Lord. This would not be happening if you did not know and love Christ. The world will gladly throw you a parade if you walk with them, but if you walk and talk for Christ they will want to make you a parade. You now have joined the fellowship of Christ's suffering. I Peter 4:13 says [13] *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*

You are not suffering to add to Christ's sufferings, for you are suffering for Christ in order to suffer with Christ. You are suffering for Christ and His name in order to exalt Christ and His name. That is what God has given you the great strength, power and freedom to do. Stephen did it as the stones were raining down. Stephen forgives those stoning him having learned it from Christ and he rejoices in the Lord that he could honor the Lord for he used it as a moment to honor Christ.

Thirdly, we see two implications which are indications for those who are suffering for Christ. The first implication is you are suffering for the name of Christ. You pray in Jesus' name. You are saved by confessing the name of Jesus. The Bible says there is no other name whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). The Bible says one day at that name every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Romans 14:11). It is that Name that they confessed when they were supposed to say 'Caesar is Lord' for they said 'Jesus is Lord.' It is that Name that you suffer for.

You don't want to suffer as a murderer, a thief or an evil doer according to I Peter 4:15. You might think 'what Christian is going to do that?' Certainly unbelievers can but Christians also have. David was a man after God's own heart yet David by conspiracy was a murderer. David also stole what didn't belong to him—Bathsheba. David also did evil. The thing I love about David is not only was he a great man, he was a great sinner but praise God by His grace he was a great repenter. Then Peter adds a fourth thing to that list which is a meddler.

The word meddler is really interesting because my title is right there. It is a compound word translated meddler. It starts as the word for man and the other is the word *epískopos* translated as overseer—a man overseer. It is saying, don't be a man who is overseeing things that he ought not to be overseeing. My mother would add to this, "mind your business son." I'm really not a person's pastor until they go through our pastor's class to join the church, now I'm always available as a Christian but I'm not your pastor. The Bible says to shepherd the flock of God *among you* (I Peter 5:2) and being among us is voluntary. That has to be your decision, not my assumption. If I start being a pastor in your life and you're not a member I am a meddler because I don't have that authority. I can be there to help with your children but if I start to parent them then I'm a meddler.

Peter is saying don't go where you're not given authority and don't be self-righteous or self-important. Don't be a meddler and if you suffer for being a murderer, a thief, an evil doer or a meddler then that's not suffering for Christ's sake. He has done something here linguistically that is so intricate that I don't want you to miss it. I want you to see I Peter 4:15–16 together for it says [15] *But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.* [16] *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God **in that name**.* Now when you suffer take that opportunity to give glory to God in that name. You suffer for that name now give glory in that name. In the name of Christ lift up that name when you're suffering for the name of Christ.

The second implication is that you suffer for Christ as a Christian. That word is only used three times in the Bible but we use that word all the time. We use the term Christian prescriptively, prescribing to ourselves that we are Christians. The first time the word Christian occurred in the Bible was in Acts 11 in Antioch where the believers are being discipled with pastors like Barnabas and Saul who later becomes Paul. It is at Antioch that they were first called Christians, little Christs and it wasn't prescriptive but descriptive. Unbelievers went so far as to say that followers of Christ then were even starting to look like Him, talk like Him and act like Him. They were known as 'little Christs' from the Greek *Christianos*.

Then a few years after that at Caesarea by the Sea where Herod Agrippa interviewed Paul and Paul was explaining to him how to become a Christian. We see when Agrippa breaks in to Paul's talk in Acts 26:24–28 which says [24] *And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind."* [25] *But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words.* [26] *For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.* [27] *King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."* [28] *And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"* You can almost hear Agrippa's sneer in verse 28. Agrippa says 'you expect me to be one of those?' It means that Paul was trying to persuade him. Then Paul responds to him in verse 29, [29] *And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains."*

Now fast forward 30 years where Peter is writing this I Peter epistle from Rome. Now it's a badge. Now it's the flag. Suffer as a Christian for Christ, like Christ, in the name of Christ to point people to Christ. In five short years Peter will do it in the midst of the fiery persecution of the Christians in Rome and in the Coliseum.

So here is the takeaway. No matter what Satan and the world would do to you because of Christ ultimately, they can only do what God has designed for you in Christ. This is inevitable. To some degree, in some manner, in some place you're going to suffer for Christ. I don't know where it will be. If you suffer for obnoxiousness that's another story. Don't hide that under Jesus' Name. When this suffering comes your world and life view says it can't happen without a sovereign God ultimately ordering this for my well-being in Christ.

Think of Joseph. His brothers sell him into slavery in Potiphar's house. A kangaroo court puts him in prison. He ends up as vice president of Egypt. A famine hits the land and here comes his father and brothers. They realize who Joseph is now and are afraid of what he might do to them for what they did to him, selling him into slavery. They realize he is in power and could get even with them. The brothers say 'let's go and ask him not to for the sake of our father.' The brothers start negotiating with him and then Joseph puts his hand down and says in Genesis 50:19–21, [19] *But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?"* [20] *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.* [21] *So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones."* Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph knows he has a sovereign God who superintends these things. Job has a sovereign God and Satan wanted to do what he wanted to do but God is the One who sovereignly limited him, purposed it and used it. This is why Paul writes in Romans 8:28, [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* Please don't listen to this gospel prosperity mess. I can't imagine what Peter would do today if he heard this being paraded in the name of the Word of faith Gospel.

When God grants you to suffer for Christ's sake, know that Jesus your sovereign Savior is at work. He loves you. He is blessing you and He is doing something in you. What is He doing? He is doing a process of burning up the dross. It just like a fire that brings the impurities of the gold up. Secondly, this is temporary and while He is working on you He is pointing you to the glory that is to be revealed. He is telling you that this world is not your home for you are just passing through. You have a mission and a message but this isn't where you put your roots down. The world keeps telling you that it's broken and it's not your home therefore you bring

the Gospel of Christ and the testimony of the Kingdom but you're headed home as a pilgrim and a sojourner. You will have glory revealed in that day.

I was in Uganda for a speaking engagement and I could hear them building a platform for me to speak. Realize that when Satan builds a platform to persecute you and the world is driving in the nails it's all to the specification of the God the Father because that platform will be for you to proclaim and amplify Christ. That is all they are doing — building a platform for you to proclaim Christ to people who would never listen to us that will listen to us as we suffer for Christ's sake. God is showing you your place in the fellowship of the unashamed. Peter will know this in just a few short years.

I'll never forget a dear friend and mentor of mine Dr. Edmund Clowney when he told us about Armando Valladares who was an employee of the Revolutionary Government in Cuba when a tyrant was in power who jailed Christians. Whenever there is a tyranny in government they cannot tolerate Christians and their message of liberty and forgiveness. So they always target Christians. This is what Fidel Castro did starting in the 1950s. Every time a Christian was led out to execution they all had one phrase they said and Armando Valladares would hear it and eventually came to Christ. As the Christians were led out they said 'Christ is King and is the name above all names.' They finally got so tired of it that in 1963 the guards and officials would gag their mouth but then with gagged mouths they would hum the hymns on their way to death.

All they were doing was providing a platform for people like Armando Valladares to be converted. That is why Martin Luther penned these words in that glorious hymn of the Reformation, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*;

*And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.*

That word above all earthly powers, is Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Christ, the Cornerstone, the Anchor of our soul, thank You for the honesty of a pastor like Peter who not only tells us what to expect when we own Christ in the blessings of eternity, but also in the challenges of faithfulness. Thank You Jesus that in the midst of Satan and the world's devious designs you are providing for us a platform to proclaim Christ, a process to grow in Christ, an opportunity to suffer like Christ, and a glorious privilege to tell people with an amplification system we would have never had about Christ. So God for my brothers and sisters would You be at work in their life? For those of you reading this who have not yet come to Christ, I invite you to the fellowship of the unashamed who suffer for Him that we who are not ashamed of the Gospel may tell others that He loves them. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

CHRISTIAN SUFFERING

- I. Identity of those who suffer for Christ
 - Beloved
 - Blessed
- II. Instructions to those who suffer for Christ
 - Do not be surprised
 - Do rejoice
- III. Indications for those who suffer for Christ
 - For the Name of Christ
 - As a Christian

LIFE TAKEAWAY

No matter what Satan and the world would do to you because of Christ, ultimately they can only do what God has designed for you in Christ.

Process – Pointer – Platform – Place

ELECT EXILES – GOSPEL BLESSINGS

1. You have an imperishable inheritance kept for you.
2. You are kept for your inheritance through trials.
3. You are Justified by the imperishable blood of Christ.
4. You are Regenerated by imperishable seed God's Word preached.
5. You are Living Stones made into a Temple for God's dwelling presence.
6. You are a Royal Priesthood.
7. You are a Chosen Race.
8. You are a Called People.
9. You are a People of God's own Possession.
10. You are a Holy Nation.
11. You are a People of Divine Mercy.
12. You are a People Redeemed from Sin's Shame and Blessed with Divine Honor.
13. You are a Purposed People—proclaiming the Christ's excellency as living sacrifices.
14. The Consummation of all things is assured and the imminent Return of Christ.

ELECT EXILES – GOSPEL COMMANDS

1. Personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness in life.
2. Sincere and heart-felt love for one another.
3. Cultivation of an appetite for God's Word.
4. A lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God.
5. Subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolishness.
6. Arm yourself with the mind of Christ to suffer for Christ.
7. Pursue and cultivate a sound and sober mind marked by a life filled with prayer.
8. Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you.