

XLIII. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in the Exile

“Unsurprised—Part 4”

I Peter 4:12–19

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This is our fourth and last study I Peter 4:12–19 but initially I’m going to read verse 19. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. I Peter 4:19 says [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.

Whenever you see a ‘therefore’ in God’s Word you almost always ask yourself ‘what is it *there for?*’ If you were reading the 13 epistles Paul wrote you would see a liberal, multiple fascination with the word ‘therefore’ for it is amazing how much he uses especially in the book of Ephesians, but with the epistles of Peter it is not so. In the epistle of Peter it is only there two times and in this verse 19 is the second time. Peter uses this word with scarcity, pointedly and thoughtfully, not as liberally and continually as Paul but here is what they have in common. They both understand why that word is there and why it is so important.

There are two reasons why the word ‘therefore’ is so important. The first reason is whatever you are about to read after the word ‘therefore’ cannot be fully and rightly understood without knowing what has gone before it. The second thing it’s telling you is that what is coming next is the reason that everything else is written, not the only reason or exclusive reason but a crucial reason. In other words, you are about to read a distillation, a focus, an exhortation or an admonition and everything that was said before this word was said to get you to this place. The things written before I Peter 4 was designed to get you right where we are now. So you can’t understand what is here without understanding what has gone before. So what is it that is being said here?

To sum up very briefly what went before I Peter 4:19 is that pastor Peter has made sure of three things. One is that he has made sure you know who you are as a Christian, in Christ is because of Christ and he uses the word ‘elect’ to tell you that you are the chosen people of God, holy, set apart by the grace of God. He has taken you from death unto life through His Son by what Jesus did on the cross for you. Up to this point, Peter has given you 15 markers (Gospel blessings) of who you are in Christ, because of Christ.

Secondly, Peter has told us what we are to do for Christ because of Christ. Up to this point Peter has given us eight Gospel commands of what we are to do for Christ because of Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Thirdly, Peter says that part of being in Christ and serving Christ is the inevitable suffering for Christ. Things like the prosperity gospel which is false teaching don’t give you this message. Philippians 1:29 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.* II Timothy 3:12 says [12] *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Jesus says 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 says in John 15:20, [20] *If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.*

Peter has been telling us not to be surprised but to be ready, encouraged and equipped the inevitable suffering that will come for Christ. This is not the suffering because the world is under the curse of sin or the suffering that comes because of your sin. Peter is talking about the Christian suffering that comes for the name of Christ and because of Christ. I have summed it up this way; every true Christian to some degree at some time in some way will suffer for Christ. Peter has given us this message continually in some way for four chapters.

Now I want to go back to I Peter 4:12–18 that set up for verse 19 to look at the context. I Peter 4:12–18 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 (saved with difficulty), what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Peter starts this passage out by telling you God loves you and has marked you out as elect exiles. As an exile you are an ambassador for Christ as you are in the world and not of the world because your citizenship is in heaven. This suffering is inevitable and God has a purpose in it, for He is refining you as He gives you a platform through this to tell others about Him. He is reminding you that this world is not your home as He prepares you for heaven through this. When you suffer you learn how to love one another well. When this kind of suffering comes upon you is not arbitrary, accidental or circumstantial. God is doing something with Satan's adversarial attacks on you and with the world's adversarial attacks on you so don't be surprised. What you are experiencing is for His glory and the taste of the Glory to come.

The word Christian here is only used three times in the Bible. It was used in Antioch as a term of derision in Acts 11:26b which says [26b] *And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians*. It was used by Herod Agrippa when Paul was evangelizing him in Acts 26:28 which says [28] *And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"* By the time Peter uses it here it has become a badge of honor for believers. As Christians we are to embrace this suffering.

Please know you are not scarcely saved, you are fully saved, secured in Jesus. The blood of Jesus is not shed in vain but we are saved with difficult because it cost God His Son. You are being saved through the practice of sin because you are growing through difficulty. If God loves you so much that He goes through this degree of difficulty to save you from sin's penalty, power and increasingly from its practice, then what awaits those who have said 'no' to this Jesus? We don't have to wonder because the Bible tells us and it's a place called hell. It is unendurable yet endured. It's unspeakable yet experienced for eternity. Yet look at what God has done to save you from that. In other words, Peter is telling us that every time we suffer remember the suffering of those who are not suffering for Christ and bring them to Christ. As they look on you, insult you, attack you and assault you, look beyond them to what awaits them and tell them of the Savior whom you love.

Now after all this, what should we do? This is where we get Gospel command number nine which is in I Peter 4:19 which again says [19] *Therefore let those who suffer according to*

God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. This verse divides itself in two ways – who he is talking to and what he is saying.

He is talking to those who suffer according to God's will and they are the elect of God which is what he has already told us. It is those who are in Christ and Christ is in them and you will suffer for Christ's sake. So Peter is telling us that this suffering is according to God's will. The world and Satan may be doing it to attack the Lord through you but God is sovereign and is over it. What they mean for evil, God means for good and that's who Peter is talking to here. God's sovereign, marshalling reign is at work through His Savior for His purposes in your life. Peter is merely repeating what he has already said in the previous chapters and that is why he uses the word 'therefore.'

So what should you do? You are to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. Because God is sovereign and working through your suffering for Christ, you can have the confidence of Job in your testament. It is the same reason you can have the confession of Joseph who was sold into slavery. In Potiphar's house he was wrongly accused and convicted by Potiphar's wife. He goes to prison and is forsaken by those he encouraged and when they got out they forgot him. Then God took him into Pharaoh's mansion and becomes like a vice president. Years later, his brothers, because of a famine come to Egypt for help and Joseph is there to help them, the one they sold into slavery. When they realize who is in charge they are overcome by fear but found a way to get in front of him.

Joseph says to them 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. God is sovereign and He draws straight lines with crooked sticks. It doesn't excuse those who meant it for evil but that doesn't stop God who is marshalling, governing and sovereignly working over any and all of it. Proverbs 21:1 says [1] *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.*

Secondly, Peter wants us to trust and commit ourselves to that God who is at work sovereignly. The word entrust in I Peter 4:19 is in the present, continuing. So it would read this way for meaning; *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will **keep on entrusting** their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* Realize your soul includes your body. When we talk about souls we are talking about the essence of the person made in the image of God and their dignity. Acts 2:41 says [41] *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand **souls**.* We used to use the word souls when we talked about some tragedy and how many 'souls' were lost.

We see this all the way back in Genesis. God made Adam from the ground. What is he? He is a corpse. Then God breathed into him the breath of life and Adam became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). That is what makes you, you. Don't think of the body and soul as if your soul is in your body like the passenger of a car. That's a Greek view of life. Don't think that way but think Biblically where it's two threads woven into one cloth where what happens to your physically affects you spiritually and what happens to your spiritually affects you physically. So Peter is telling us to entrust the very essence of all that you are and who you are, your completeness, to God and keep on doing it. Keep on committing and entrusting yourself to the Lord by doing the commands of the Lord, not to be saved but because He loves you.

So why does Peter say we are to entrust ourselves to a faithful *Creator*? Why didn't Peter say 'God your Provider' or 'God your Savior' or 'God your Shepherd'? One reason I think

Peter uses Creator is that he has already told us that God is our Savior, our Redeemer, our Shepherd and that He is faithful. It is the only time in the Bible that this word is used and translated Creator. Now the concept and narrative of God as Creator is all over the Bible. There is no way you can trust God as Redeemer and Sustainer until you know who God is as Creator. As Paul is evangelizing those in Athens he starts off as the God who made you.

Peter is telling us God is sovereign over this, has a purpose, don't be surprised so keeping on trusting Him because He has a promise that He is sovereignly going to deliver. The next question should be, can He do it? There is no better way to tell you that your God is able than to tell you who He is as Creator. As Creator He is transcendent and this does not mean location – God up there over everything. Transcendent is vocation where He is over everything. He is majestic and sovereign and there is none like Him. Holy is the Lord our God.

Secondly, look at this creation. My favorite time of the day is the gloaming where the day becomes night and I see the stars and am reminded that everything this is working. I'm in a uni-verse not a multi-verse. No matter where I go in this universe 2 plus 2 is going to be 4. No matter where I go God's law stands and everything I'm seeing He made. Another choice is that nothing made itself into something or the self-existent God with wisdom and with power said to the nothing, 'let there be light' and there was light. By His spoken word He brought everything into existence. He spoke and the worlds were made and the stars also. If this God has made this universe with its perfect order, all of its intricacies and the majesties of stars with all that is working in perfect harmony then this God is able to deliver and that's why Peter puts this word here. The very people bringing this assault would not be here if God had not spoken. God has said to you that 'you are Mine and I'm yours and I will deliver you' so keep on entrusting yourself to Him.

Peter the preacher has a prioritized precept that is now a command. Here is the ninth Gospel command. When you suffer for Christ under God's sovereign purposes then intentionally commit to keep on trusting God's unfailing wisdom to guide you and His incomparable power to deliver you. You are under the care of His sovereign purposes. You are not the victim of this world. The things that are happening in your life are not arbitrary, circumstantial or accidental for a sovereign God is at work and He is accomplishing His will so think like Jesus.

Jesus is facing a suffering, not for His name, but to give us a name so that we could be saved and He says to His Father, in John 12:27–28, [27] *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. [28] Father, glorify your name.”* Then a voice came from heaven: *“I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”* Jesus also said in Matthew 26:39, *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”* As Jesus so demonstrates in His suffering to equip us how to join Him in suffering, not for salvation but for our Savior, so let us do likewise. Whenever you suffer for His sake, look past those bringing the suffering upon you and see your God for He is at work.

His will is being accomplished in your life. Therefore you can give thanks in everything because it's your God at work and you can keep on trusting Him. You can keep on following Him because you have a sovereign God who is at work and He is able. He is the faithful Creator and through His Son He is faithful to you. Polycarp, the Christian Bishop of Smyrna was about to die and they said if he would deny God and acknowledge Caesar he could live but he replied, 'For 86 years have I served Him, He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme against Him? He is my King and my Savior.' Even at the moment of his torturous death he looked past them

right into his God, so even at 86 he keeps on trusting. It is not because he is resting in the resolve of his courage but because of his God. As he looks to the Lord he realizes the Lord is faithful.

When I was in the first grade my grandmother came to live with us for a while because my dad was about to get sold into another league. When I would get home from school she would be waiting for me with some cookies and milk. She would put me on her lap and she would have a Bible verse to tell me and sing me a song. There two songs she would always want to sing. Those songs came back to me in the depths of my darkness and rebellion and wouldn't let me go, even in the midst of my immorality, violence, profanity and rebellion.

One of the two songs was the hymn titled *Isn't He Wonderful* and the lyrics are;

*Isn't He wonderful,
Isn't He wonderful,
Isn't Jesus, my Lord, wonderful!
Eyes have seen, ears have heard,
It's recorded in God's Word,
Isn't Jesus, my Lord, wonderful.*

The one that really grabbed me was the hymn *He is Able to Deliver Thee* and the lyrics say;

*He is able to deliver thee,
He is able to deliver thee;
Tho' by sin opprest, Go to Him for rest;
Our God is able to deliver thee.*

That's why he said the One that flung out the world and the universe says 'I will deliver you. I will be faithful to you. I am able to deliver you.'

Before my first grade year we were living with my grandparents and my dad would put me up on the refrigerator and say 'Son, jump to your dad.' I would just jump but something happened when I turned five where I began to think 'is my dad able to catch me?' I looked at the United States Marine Corp tattoo on his arm and that was encouraging, and I looked close and he was big. I trusted him because he was able. Our God is able.

There is a song we sing taken from Isaiah 43:1-3 which says [1] *But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. [2] When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. [3] For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

Consider two stanzas from the hymn *How Firm a Foundation* that says;

*Fear not, I am with thee, oh be not dismayed
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid.
I strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

*When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.*

God is able to do this and turn this into something that will be a blessing. It is the refiner's fire that is perfecting and preparing you. When metallurgists heat gold the impurities come up and when do they stop turning up the heat? As the impurities rise to the top the metallurgist sweeps them away, then he turns up the heat a little more, and sweeps the impurities away and he will finally stop turning up the heat when he can see his reflection in the gold. That is what God is doing with us.

God is working in us until we look like Jesus. He is at work within us. So keep on trusting Him when the fiery trials come. The One who spoke and worlds came into existence, the One with wisdom brings this together. The One who is the Creator is the One who says "I am able" for He is the One who spoke into nothing and all things were made for even nothingness can't resist His command. It is that God who is with you. Keep on trusting Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You O God that You are the One who is with us sovereignly, measuring and working in our lives. Father, I know there are some reading this that can't keep on trusting Jesus as they grow in grace because they have not yet come to Jesus to trust Him as Lord and Savior. If that is where you are and you want this Savior to be yours please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you and help you start this new life in Christ. The Lord God of Glory is ready to save. The One who made you and everything will save you and bring you with Him in a new heavens and a new earth. Finally, Lord those who do know You as they encounter the headwinds of a culture that is hostile to You may we look beyond it and see You at work. May we trust You and keep on trusting You as we follow You, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

EXAMINING PASTOR PETER'S PRIORITIZED PRECEPT

Gospel Command #9

Who? What?

LIFE TAKEAWAY

When you suffer for Christ under God's Sovereign purposes, intentionally commit to keep on trusting God's unfailing Wisdom to guide you and His incomparable Power to deliver you.