

## *Outrageous Hope Extravagant Joy*

### **When Life is Hard**

#### **Week 8 – 1 Peter 4:12-19**

In the summer of A.D. 64, a fire ravaged the city of Rome. Considering most of the structures were built almost exclusively with wood, the flames quickly spread. Nero envisioned expanding his palace grounds and refurbishing all of Rome. Therefore, most attributed the raging inferno to the emperor. Most of the population lost everything. An increasing public outrage against Nero forced him to deflect accusations as the originator of the fire. With a stroke of demonically-engineered genius, Nero pinned the devastating blaze on the Christian community.

Christians were already the targets of hatred. Slandering followers of Christ had become an acceptable pastime within the culture as hatred for this segment of Roman society grew. The Romans viewed Christianity as a sect of Judaism. Anti-Semitic bias had already been prevalent, so it was a short step to embrace anti-Christian sentiment as well. A few well-placed rumors assigning the blame for the fire to the Christians, and the masses eagerly bought into the lie.

*Following the burning of Rome, Nero capitalized on that anti-Christian sentiment and punished the Christians by using them as human torches to light his garden parties, by allowing them to be sewn inside animal skins to be devoured by predatory animals, by crucifying them, and by subjecting them to other heinous, unjust tortures.*<sup>1</sup> ~ John MacArthur

Most likely, Peter put pen to paper just before Nero's persecution against the early church began in earnest. Obviously, Peter's repetition of counsel and comfort to Christians throughout both his epistles were born out of the current climate of cultural intolerance of the Lord Jesus and His people. His theme of the proper Christian response to suffering (especially the unprovoked and unjust variety) resonates with us as we watch the political and social climate become increasingly (and alarmingly) intolerant of our Christian beliefs. How then should we respond?

#### **I. Rejoice: Your Faith is Being Purified – 1 Peter 4:12-14**

In this passage, Peter is addressing suffering that results from holy living, not as a result of sin. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Peter 4:12 KJV, underline mine). Suffering and persecution are part and parcel of the Christian experience.

*The word try here means to test you as gold is tested in a furnace, and it literally means to purify you. It's the same thing that old Job meant when he said, "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Do you know what that kind of persecution and that kind of trial and that kind of trouble will do for you? Just burn out the impurities. Just burn away the dross.*<sup>2</sup> ~ Dr. Adrian Rogers

Fiery trials burn away the dross and refine the faith. Speaking to His disciples Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:19). “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 15:33).

Trials of faith allow us to “share the sufferings of Christ.” Our **finite** level of pain (both physical and emotional) hardly rival the **infinite** agony the Lord endured on the cross, but to a degree we can identify with Him through painful circumstances we endure for righteousness sake. When you bear the reproach of the Lord Jesus, you become a partaker of Christ’s fellowship. “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29).

*Trials that are part of the will of God are not warnings that we are disobeying Him; they are God’s tools for perfecting His own.*<sup>3</sup> ~ Warren Wiersbe

While no right-thinking person would desire afflictions, when it comes upon us we can trust the heart of our Father to use it for our good and His glory (see Romans 8:28-30). “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and God rests on you” (1 Peter 4:14).

*The suffering we endure now is but a prelude to the glory that we will share at His coming. Furthermore, the Spirit of God “rests with refreshing power” (literal translation of v. 14) upon the suffering believer. When the three Hebrew children went into the fiery furnace, they had faith that God could deliver them (Daniel 3:19–30). He not only delivered them, but He walked with them.*<sup>4</sup> ~ Warren Wiersbe

This is the reality behind James’ admonition, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-3). Beloved, we can rejoice knowing Jesus Christ is standing strong on our behalf in the midst of our darkest days.

Rejoice, suffering saint. Your faith is being purified!

## **II. Repent-God is Being Glorified – 1 Peter 4:15-16**

“Make sure that none of you suffer because of your own sin,” Peter writes. Repent if you are experiencing the consequences of your own sin and/or have come under the discipline and reproof of the Lord (see Hebrews 12:5-11).

“If anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4:16). Once a year, Roman citizens were required to pledge their loyalty to the emperor. They would put a pinch of incense on a designated altar and recite, “Caesar is Lord!” declaring their allegiance to him. The Christian mantra is, “Jesus is

Lord.” When believers responded in this manner, many were arrested, tried, and martyred for their declaration of allegiance to Heaven’s King!

Divine allegiance to the “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14) coupled with holy living are prerequisites for God’s people. We no longer are to be held under sin’s sway. Paul wrote, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:12-13). Repent, child of God. Your God is being glorified!

### **III. Rest – Jesus is Being Magnified – 1 Peter 4:17-19**

“For it is time for judgement to begin with the household of God.” That is, God judges the sins of His people. Peter’s rationale is this, “If God sends trials to His own people, He will surely judge those outside a personal relationship with Him.” As we know from Scripture, judgement for those who reject Jesus Christ will be meted out for eternity in hell (see Mark 10:43-44; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11-15). Peter again infers the requirement of God’s people for holy living.

The only suffering believers will experience is on this side of Heaven. Ultimately, Jesus “will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain” (Revelations 21:4). We have trials now but will experience our eternal glory for eternity with Christ. The lost have their glory now but will experience their eternal suffering for eternity separated from Christ.

Psalm 73 contrasts the end of the wicked with the righteous. The psalmist wrote, “My feet came close to stumbling, my steps almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant, for I saw the prosperity of the wicked. . . They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind. . . Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. . . When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!” (see Psalm 73). God is the Judge. We operate best when we leave justice and vengeance to the Lord!

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

*The word for “commit” used here is a banking term; it refers to the act of leaving an amount on deposit for safekeeping. It ties in beautifully with the “gold” illustration in 1:7. God sends the fiery trial to burn away the dross, and we commit ourselves to Him for safekeeping, knowing that He cannot fail us. We can be sure that God will “pay interest” on our deposit. But note that we commit ourselves in doing good; that is, we commit*

*ourselves to God as we obey His Word. This is a daily and hourly surrender, living to please Him and serving others.*<sup>5</sup> ~ Warren Wiersbe

Nothing can touch the life of a child of God unless God ordains or allows it. Everything is Father-filtered through the loving hand and sovereign will of God. Therefore, even in trials and tribulations, we can rest in Him. Rest, weary warrior. Your Lord is being magnified!

How then should we respond to difficult days and troubled times? Rejoice. Your faith is being purified! Repent. Your God is being glorified! Rest. Your Lord is being magnified! Regardless of this life's circumstances, we can experience outrageous hope and extraordinary joy!

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J.F., Jr. (2004). *I Peter* (p. 248). Chicago: Moody Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Rogers, A. (2017). *A Strange Friend*. In Adrian Rogers Sermon Archive (I Peter 4:12-19). Signal Hill, CA: Rogers Family Trust.

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [\*Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament\*](#) (p. 751). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [\*Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament\*](#) (p. 752). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>5</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [\*Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament\*](#) (p. 752-753). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.