

Suffering for Christ has been the central topic in this letter but now Peter discusses an aspect of this suffering that may seem unusual: the joy found in sharing Christ's sufferings. There are special blessings reserved for those who suffer for Jesus Christ.

We must remember that while Peter was writing to these Christians, they were undergoing tremendous persecution after the burning of Rome, which the Emperor Nero had blamed on them. This fire may have influenced Peter's choice of words in verse 12.

¹² Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

“Beloved, think it not strange [unusual; foreign]” - Peter was warning his readers that to suffer persecution as a believer in Christ was not an unusual thing. Jesus had warned them of this before He was crucified (**John 15:18** “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*”). In fact, historically it has been the exception when Christianity has been thought well of in the world. We in America have been blessed to live during a period when Christianity was accepted and even admired by the world, but that period seems to be swiftly passing.

“concerning the fiery trial [burning] which is to try [test; prove] you” - The word translated “fiery trial” means “burning.” The purpose of this burning, Peter says, is to test us. The implication is that even though the persecutions come through unbelievers, it is God that allows it to happen for the purpose of testing us. Remember that God tested Abraham when He told him to sacrifice Isaac: **Gen. 22:1a** “*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [test] Abraham...*” When Abraham was about to sacrifice his son God stopped him and said “*now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*” (Gen. 22:12b) Sometimes God allows us to go through a test in order to prove the genuineness of our faith.

Fire was also used to purify precious metals and God sometimes uses the fires of adversity to removed the impurities in our life.

Psalms 66:10 “*For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried [smelt] us, as silver is tried.*”

1 Peter 1:7 “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*”

“as though some strange thing happened unto you” - The world hates Jesus Christ and therefore followers of Jesus Christ also become the targets of this hatred. So when we have to suffer for Christ we need not think it is a bad luck or a fluke in circumstances. It is “business as usual” for a Christian because the world is in rebellion against God.

¹³ But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

“But rejoice, inasmuch [as far as; to the extent] as ye are partakers [to become a partner] of Christ's sufferings” - The word “inasmuch” implies that the more we suffer for Christ the more we should rejoice. The Greek word translated “partakers” carries the idea of the fellowship of experiencing something together. The world hated Christ so much that they crucified Him. When we suffer for Christ we are sharing in His sufferings for us and our fellowship with Him grows. There is a bond between soldiers who have faced death and hardship together in battle that would not have existed otherwise. Likewise, our bond with Jesus Christ grows the more we suffer for His sake, becoming a source of rejoicing.

There is also the honor of being associated with Jesus Christ through our suffering for Him. After being beaten and rebuked by the Jewish council in Jerusalem for preaching in the name of Jesus Christ, the apostles rejoiced (**Acts 5:41** “*And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*”).

“that, when his glory shall be revealed [manifestation; appearing], ye may be glad also with exceeding joy [to jump for joy]” - The word Peter uses that is translated “shall be revealed” is *apokálypsis* (apocalypse), which is the same word John used in Rev. 1:1 to introduce that book: “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ...*” Peter is talking about the second coming of Christ, when He returns in power and glory (Rev. 19:11-16). Because we have taken part in His sufferings we will have a part in His glory when He returns, and this prospect will make us glad enough to jump with joy. We will rejoice in at last seeing Christ given the glory that He so richly deserves.

¹⁴ If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

“If ye be reproached [rebuked for wrong doing] for the name of Christ, happy [blessed] are ye” - There is a blessing being reproached for our association with Jesus Christ.

“for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you” - While the world seeks to heap insult and shame on us, the spirit of glory promises to be with us. Remember the stoning of Stephen? The Spirit of God was with him so that he had a face like an angel (Acts 6:15) and then, being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up toward heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55). God will not abandon us when we suffer for Him.

“on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” - While the world is saying evil things about Jesus Christ, we are glorifying Christ through both our speech and our actions. The very things that they are speaking evil of (our living and speaking for Christ) are bringing glory to Christ.

¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

In contrast to suffering for Christ, Peter lists some offenses that legitimately deserve the world's wrath: committing murder, being a thief or doing such evil things. It may seem odd that along with these wicked sins he groups an offense that we might not think of as belonging in the same league as the others: being a busybody in other men's affairs. This describes a meddler in things that do not concern him. People who stick their nose where it doesn't belong are hated by everyone and their resulting suffering has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Such people tend to be troublemakers, offering their unsolicited opinions and stirring up strife in matters that are none of their business.

Peter does not seem to mention these sins because he thinks that his readers may commit them. Instead, he seems to be mentioning these things in contrast to suffering for Christ. The sins mentioned in this verse are universally hated in the world with good reason. Being a Christian was also hated by the world and Peter wants us to see that if you are going to be hated by the world it is better for it to be for a reason that pleases God.

¹⁶ Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Unlike the offenses mentioned in the previous verse, there is no reason to be ashamed for a person suffering simply because he is a Christian standing for righteousness. Rather than being embarrassed for being punished for genuine sins he can glorify God because his suffering is because of righteousness. In Peter's day unbelievers used the name "Christian" as a derogatory word, but here he tells his readers that to be identified with Christ was not a source of shame but a badge of honor.

¹⁷ For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" - "Judgment" does not necessarily mean "condemnation" for to judge something is to evaluate it in order to discover the truth. Thus the righteous love judgment because they will get justice while the wicked will get punished. God's judgment of "the house of God" (His people) is to test and prove His people, purifying them in the process (the fiery trials) as well as purging His house of the pretenders. When this testing/proving/evaluating/judging is complete His house will only have those whose righteousness is genuinely found in Jesus Christ.

"and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" - If the only means that God's people have of getting to heaven is through the Jesus Christ, what chance do the ungodly have who have not obeyed the "gospel of God" (trusted Christ as Savior)? This rhetorical question has the obvious answer that they will be condemned to hell.

"And if the righteous scarcely [with difficulty; hardly] be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" - Peter quotes from **Prov. 11:31**: "*Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.*" The proverb says that both the righteous and the wicked will be rewarded according to their natures. Peter's quotation comes from the Greek translation of the OT, which seems to allow for the fact that even the righteous have sin natures. If the righteous with their inherent sinfulness are only saved through faith in Christ, what will happen to those who have not trusted in Christ? They will have to bear the full weight of their sins themselves.

¹⁹ Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

"Wherefore" - Or "therefore." Based on Peter's premise that the suffering that God's people are enduring is serving to purify them and to strengthen their fellowship with Christ, they should entrust themselves to God.

"let them that suffer according to the will of God" - God could easily prevent His people from ever suffering at the hands of the ungodly, so if we do suffer it is by the will of God, either to purify us, glorify Him, or both.

"commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing" - Since our suffering is according to the will of God, we should trust the outcome of that suffering to Him. We should trust our souls to Him, knowing that He knows what He is doing, and continue our "well doing" even if it causes us further suffering.

"as unto a faithful Creator" - God created us, and as our Creator He knows how to keep our souls safe. We belong to our Creator, and we are His for Him to do with us however He pleases. We should entrust ourselves to Him, knowing that He will be faithful to His promise to take care of us.

1 Tim. 1:12 (Paul speaking about his calling to preach the gospel) "*For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*"