

1 Peter 4:12-19 “Graceful Suffering”

Community Group Questions

1. Have you ever been persecuted because you are a Christian?
2. How did you respond to that persecution?
3. Do you think in our country our rights as Christians are in jeopardy?
4. Have you ever suffered the Lord’s discipline?
5. Why do you think the Lord was disciplining you and how do you know that was His discipline?

Have you ever suffered? What did that suffering look like?

Was it financial? Was it relational? Was it your health? Was it loss?

I think we all know what it is like to suffer to some degree but today’s passage talks about a different type of suffering that some of you may have encountered but others of you may never have encounter and that suffering is “suffering because you are a Christian”

The Christians that Peter was writing to were suffering because of their faith in Jesus and Peter was directing them on how to handle this type of suffering.

If you are not currently suffering I want you to think about two things as I teach

- Use this to root your faith for coming suffering, because it will come.
- Use your current freedom and non-suffering time to spread the Gospel

Today in 1st Peter 4:12-19 we are going to learn how to gracefully suffer and when we do that it will bring glory to Jesus.

Graceful suffering...

Expects trials vrs 12

Trials are not strangers to the Christian life; they are to be expected. 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 people.

Suffering for Jesus proves our faith, not to God but to the people around us.

We need to mentally prepare ourselves for suffering because it will come at some point and to some extent...how do we do that?

Prayer-

Scripture memory-

Learn the truth about who suffers. Don't fall into the trap of thinking Christians are immune to suffering.

RC Sproul said *"our Christian faith means nothing until we come to the valley of the shadow of death"*

Why? Because we finally come to the realization that we need the Lord the most. Remember that is what brought you to the Lord in the first place GOSPEL

Graceful suffering expects trials and it also...

Rejoices in trials vrs 13-14

When trials come, we are suffering for His sake and sharing suffering with Him. Paul speaks of this in Philippians and James also tells us to "count it all joy". The suffering we endure now is a taste of the glory that we will share at His coming. The Spirit of God rests upon the suffering believer.

Miraculously we feel the presence of the Lord in a greater way when trials and suffering come.

In Daniel 3 we have an example of this with Shadrack, Meshack and Abindigo. They would not worship the statue, thrown into the

furnace, Jesus was in the fire with them. They had faith that God could deliver them, He not only delivered them, but He walked with them.

Not only is Jesus walking with us in suffering we need to be reminded that we are in good company when we suffer for righteousness sake. They hated Jesus first

But how or why can we rejoice?

-We realize that our suffering has a purpose in God's plan. We can rejoice because we know that God is working in us and through us.

CS Lewis said "Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny"

In your suffering God is pruning you to do more and better things for Him

The second way we can rejoice is realize

-It is an opportunity to draw closer to the Lord.

People either run to God or run from God when hard times come.

When we run from Him we get mad at Him or act as if He is not good or not there. At this point our suffering becomes useless, pointless and just another thing to deal with in life.

But when we run to Him knowing that He is there and can help and comfort us this encourages us to get closer to Him, when we grow closer to Him it is a reason to rejoice.

Graceful suffering not only expects trials, rejoices in trials it is also...

Is not ashamed in trials. Vrs 15-16

Don't be ashamed because you did not do anything wrong. This is also a reminder don't do something wrong and retaliate against those that persecute you.

Roman law required each citizen to pledge his loyalty to the emperor. Once a year, the citizen would put a pinch of incense on the proper altar and say, "Caesar is Lord!" But the Christian confesses that "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

Believers refused to bow before Caesar. Sometimes the Roman official would write the name of Christ on the ground or on a wall and ask the Christian to spit on it. If the Christian refused, he or she would be arrested, tried, and maybe killed. By bearing the name of Christ they were put to shame before their friends.

So Peter is reminding them don't be ashamed of the name of Jesus but let the suffering bring glory to Jesus because you are willing to suffer for doing the right thing.

But sometimes we may suffer as Christians for doing the wrong thing. You are suffering because you are a Christian and you turned your back on God or are living a way that is displeasing to Him. When we gracefully suffer it...

Proves our salvation vrs 17-18

Christians get disciplinary earthly judgments from the Lord when we stray away. Peter is saying if this is true for believers how much more will judgment come to those that do not believe.

God begins His judgment at His house and we know we are Christians because we have a Father that loves us and is willing to discipline us when we do something wrong.

So when we gracefully accept that discipline and come through it bring glory to Jesus.

Who does this prove our salvation to?

-Us, because when discipline comes our way we know we are loved. Proverbs 3 and Hebrews 12 reminds us of that

-To others, because when we suffer the discipline and come through it doing good and giving glory to Jesus others realize there is something different about us.

And finally graceful suffering...

Displays Trust vrs 19

The word for “entrust” used here is a banking term; it refers to the act of leaving an amount on deposit for safekeeping. It ties back to the “gold” illustration in 1st Peter 1:7. God sends the fiery trial to burn away the dross (worthless things), and we trust Him for safekeeping, knowing that He will not fail us. We can be sure that God will “pay interest” on our deposit. Christians will go through fiery trials before Christ returns and when we gracefully suffer it displays that we trust our lives with Him

The world situation will not get better. Attitudes toward Christians will not improve. The world has always hated the name of Christ and will continue to hate it.

If we identify ourselves with the name of Christ, the world will hate us. If we compromise, we will escape persecution, but we will also miss the blessing and glory of sharing Christ’s sufferings.

When we gracefully suffer we will bring glory to Jesus.