

SO, WHAT'S NEW?!!

1 PETER 4:12-19

Praise the Lord Anyhow!

So, what's new?!

In recent weeks a number of you have indicated that you have found yourselves in the midst of unjust circumstances.

Suffering when you really didn't deserve it.

Primarily, in some cases because of your testimony as a child of God.

To use Solomon's words, "There is nothing new under the sun!"

This has been going on for centuries.

Peter tells us how to live in the face of unjust suffering for Jesus' sake.

He describes

THE PROPER ATTITUDE TO HAVE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING 4:12-19

We ought not to be confused or troubled by what has hit us, but rather we should praise God because this is a clear-cut evidence that we belong to Him.

SUFFERING IS THE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF BEING IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST.

THEREFORE, PRAISE IS THE LOGICAL RESPONSE TO IT!

1. OUR SUFFERING DEMONSTRATES THAT WE'VE BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST ***4:12-14***

Christ also suffered unjustly (4:12-14).

Why should we expect to be treated better?

How to react:

1) Don't be surprised

The construction indicates that they were surprised.

Our normal reaction: I can't believe this is happening to me.

It often takes us by surprise.

We expect that everyone will like us.

We seem to have forgotten that we are involved in spiritual warfare. We are at war, and we are the enemy!

This shouldn't surprise us. Our Lord told us it was going to happen

– **Jn. 15:18-21**

The world has to hate us because it hates Him.

We are fooling ourselves if we think that we can get them to like us by just being kind and gentle enough. It won't happen!

Paul warns us that all who seek to live godly in Christ Jesus *will* suffer persecution 2 Tim. 3:12

John warned believers in the same way as Peter did 1 Jn. 3:13

The persecution was no surprise to those who had walked with our Lord.

Wiersbe: "On the job, in school, in the neighborhood, perhaps even in the family, there are people who resist the truth and oppose the gospel of Christ. No matter what a believer says or does, these people will find fault and criticize."

He describes it as a fire. Don't be surprised by "the fire".

We sometimes use the phrase: "He's really going through the fire."

Peter says, "Don't let that surprise you!"

That's the normal position for the church to be in.

We should be surprised right now because we are not going through the fire in our generation.

Those who are going through the fire, right now, are probably facing it in a different kind of way than what Peter had in mind. Nevertheless, the same principles hold true here too.

It comes for our testing => it's the assayer's fire to prove and to separate the pure gold from the contaminates that mix with it. The "trials" result in the approving of our faith 1:6-7

2) Keep on rejoicing

We ought not be surprised or confused by our suffering. 4:12

(Instead of being surprised or confused,)

We ought to rejoice that we are so identified with Him that others wish to persecute us.

The idea of rejoicing is mentioned 4 times in vss. 13-14.

We should be bubbling over with joy because of that testing of our faith (??!!!).

Suffering for Jesus' sake ought to bring us joy. Not because we enjoy suffering.

But, because we are identified with Him.

WHY?

WE REJOICE BECAUSE WE ARE IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST IN HIS SUFFERINGS. 4:13a

Because God has given us the privilege of being participants together with Christ—in suffering for His name. (Acts 5:40-42).

"to the degree that" => "in so far as," "according as" Indicates that *this is the reason*.

By suffering we participate in Christ's sufferings.

(We share with Him in them)

It's really Him they are out to get!

We are identified with Christ–

- *Now, while suffering*

**WE REJOICE BECAUSE WE WILL BE
IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST
IN HIS HOUR OF GLORY 4:13b**

We are identified with Christ–

- *Later, when He triumphs 4:13b*

Our present suffering is transformed into future glory.

Baby's birth–Jn. 16:20-22

Paul's thorn–2 Cor. 12:7-10

Jesus' death

Wiersbe: "Mature people know that life includes some 'postponed pleasures.' We pay a price *today* in order to have enjoyments in the *future*."

- The piano student may not enjoy practicing scales by the hour, but looks forward to the pleasure of playing beautiful music some day.
- The athlete may not enjoy exercising and practicing his skills, but he looks forward to winning the game by doing his best.
- Christians have something even better: our very sufferings will one day be transformed into glory.

We rejoice with Him in His future victory and glory.

**WE REJOICE BECAUSE WE HAVE THE
PRIVILEGE OF REVEALING GOD'S GLORY
4:14**

His Spirit–the Spirit of Glory (the *shekinah* of God) when people persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me, etc.

3:14–"If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *blessed . . .*"

4:14–"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, *blessed . . .*"

"Reviled" => to demote, to chide, to taunt, to revile, to reproach

There are two different sets of purposes:

They are seeking to blaspheme Him

We are seeking to glorify Him

Their action is producing God's glory.

The more they blaspheme

The more they persecute you,

The more Christ is glorified by their life.

Therefore, don't be confused or frightened

Rejoice

Give thanks to God

He knows what He's doing

He will be glorified in us.

This assumes, of course, that we are not suffering for doing wrong.

Sometimes people suffer just because they are obnoxious.

Sometimes Christians suffer because they want to fight back when they are offended.

Peter says that

OUR SUFFERING SHOULD NOT IDENTIFY US WITH EVIL DOERS, BUT WITH CHRIST 4:15-16

We aren't to suffer for doing wrong.

It's to be clear that we suffer on account of *THE NAME!*

The temptation would be to strike back—to get revenge.

If we respond in kind, we set ourselves up to be punished for it.

If we strike back at an antagonistic employer by taking what is rightfully his, whether time or goods, respect or money, we will deserve punishment as a thief.

If we hate and strike back at one who harms us, least as Christ defined it, and maybe literally.

If we commit some other kind of wrong, we will be committing a punishable offense and deserve what we get.

If we crab and complain and stick our nose into other people's affairs, we will deserve mistreatment!

Murderers and thieves deserve what they get.

So do those who do evil deeds.

So do busybodies (those who "oversee the affairs of others")

Don't do it.

Make sure that the *only* evil you can be accused of is following Christ.

NOTHING ELSE!!!

But when we do suffer as Christians we can praise God for it.

There is no basis for embarrassment when we suffer unjustly because of our faith in Christ.

"If we suffer as 'Christians'" assumes the local understanding that this was originally a derogatory term used to describe "these followers of Jesus."

In time it became an honored word.

- they were looked down on as outsiders
- they were considered less than loyal to the emperor and to their country and the things it stood for.

They ought not let the derogatory use of the name, of being called followers of Christ, cause shame.

That was nothing to be ashamed of!

Praise God for the identification!

Peter knew the feeling of being ashamed of being identified with the name of Christ. BUT, not anymore! Now he says let's praise God that we are identified with His name.

Remember our Lord's words to Peter: "After you have been restored, encourage your brethren."

They should be sure they don't suffer as a criminal or for any other kind of misconduct, but having assured that, they can praise God that they have been considered worthy to suffer for His name (4:15-16).

Be sure you've done nothing to deserve mistreatment. Then rejoice that you have been counted worthy to suffer for His name.

Neg. – Don't be ashamed

Pos. – Glorify God by this Name – Christian

In doing so, we keep company with a noble line of godly men and women.

Wiersbe reminds us of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, in the 2nd century. "He was arrested for his faith and threatened with death if he did not recant.

'Eighty and six years have I served Him and He never did me any injury.

How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

'I have respect for your age,' said the Roman officer. 'Simply say, "Away with the atheists!" and be set free.' By 'the atheists' he meant the Christians who would not acknowledge Caesar as 'lord.'

The old man pointed to the crowd of Roman pagans surrounding him and cried, 'Away with the atheists!' He was burned at the stake and his martyrdom brought glory to the name of Jesus Christ."

Many others joined him in that fate.

3. OUR PRESENT SUFFERING GUARANTEES THE FUTURE JUDGMENT OF THE UNGODLY 4:17-19

It's better to suffer now as one identified with Christ, than to suffer later, as one identified with the ungodly.

A proper attitude toward their suffering will recognize it in relationship to the principles of God's judgment (4:17-19).

God begins with those who are His own. But if God allows things to become so hard for His own children, what will it be like when His

judgment comes down on the rebellious who want nothing to do with Him?

It is a biblical principle that **God's judgment begins with His people and proceeds from them to others.**

Ezek. 9 and Mal. 3, indicate that God's judgment begins at the temple, i.e., the "house of God" and moves from there outward. That seems to be the idea Peter takes up here.

Ezek. 9–God's judgment starts from the house of God and moves out from there–this is a destructive judgment [several parallel expressions are found in LXX]

Mal. 3–A purifying judgment begins at God's house and moves outward [fewer parallel expressions, but apparently closer to Peter's idea].

In the Old Testament prophets, the message was frequently given that **God's judgment was going to begin among His own people first.**

Roger Raymer: "God allows persecutions as disciplinary judgment to purify the lives of those in the family of God."

If we suffer as we do for doing wrong, how much more will those who have turned their backs on God have to suffer for their rebellion? Keep the right perspective on this. God will right the wrongs.

Their "fiery ordeal" is the means God uses to purge His own people.

If the house of God is purged by fire, what will be the end of those who refuse to obey the gospel? Who refuse to trust Christ? Who insist on "doing it themselves?"

If God's people are allowed to suffer so much, how much greater will the suffering of the unjust be?

If ours is so hard, how about theirs? What can they expect?

If our salvation cost so much, how much greater a price will the ungodly have to pay?

God's people do suffer as part of God's correcting process to lead the family in the right way. If it's that rough on us, how much more so on them?

Prov. 11:31

LXX [which Peter quotes] "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner."

This is not a reference to uncertainty concerning salvation, or the difficulty of earning it. It does not imply uncertainty of the outcome but the difficulty of the road that we take to get to the ultimate destination. The purging process is hard to endure.

Heb.– "If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!"

Acts 14:22 "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God"

The keyword here in all these is *hard*. Getting there is not easy. But we *are* going to get there. If we have that hard a road, how much harder will the rebels have it when their turn to suffer arrives.

God allows difficult trials to come into the life of His children, particularly when correction is necessary. If this is true in the life of God's children, how much worse will it be for the unsaved?

There is no comparison between what we suffer now and what the godless are going to suffer later.

This is not a call for vengeance. It is a reminder of how much better off we are, even going through the limited time of suffering, than our persecutors for whom the wrath of God is pending.

Therefore, we should remember all that God has done for us in the past and commit ourselves to Him. 4:19 =>

**4. OUR SUFFERING SHOULD DRIVE US TO
TURN OURSELVES OVER TO GOD 4:19**

To the One who loves us with an infinite love, and who cares more about us than we care about ourselves!

To Him who has given us infinite worth because He sees us in His Son.

This is the key to the whole letter. This is the climax—the summary statement of the letter.

Swindoll: < Lenski: Entrust > : "It is a banking term and means 'to deposit.' The idea is that of depositing a treasure into safe and trustworthy hands. When it comes to trials, we deposit ourselves into God's safekeeping. And that deposit yields eternal dividends."

The FDIC tells us we can deposit our funds with confidence in our local bank and be assured it's backed by the U.S. Govt. Allstate tells us to deposit ourselves in their good hands.

Peter gives us a more secure place yet. We can deposit ourselves in God's hands—He is the faithful Creator.

He is the One Who has made and provided everything we need. Cf. Acts 4:24ff.

Do what's right, and leave the results in His hands.

He can be trusted with our lives and our future destiny.

The idea of entrusting our souls to God during trials can be traced to Jesus' example on the cross, where He deposited His soul into the care of His Father. (= "commit" in Luke 23:46).

The others will have to give account for themselves before God.

This is the issue over and over for God's people. This week, at least 3 times I've repeated this principle to someone. Again and again they respond: "Then I suppose, I am just to do

what's right and let them go right on doing what they have been doing!"

That's right! As hard as it is to do that, that is just what Peter is saying.

**COMMIT YOURSELF INTO GOD'S HANDS!
LET HIM HANDLE THE CONSEQUENCES!
HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING!**

We shouldn't be surprised that we are facing such circumstances.

Neither should we be surprised that God asks us to respond this way when it does!

Didn't our Lord set the pace for us?

**THERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS WE
OUGHT TO ASK OURSELVES WHEN
WE SUFFER:**

Why am I suffering?

- Is it because of some crime.
- Is it because we have been busybodies, sticking our noses into someone else's affairs?
- Is it because we have made trouble for ourselves?

Then don't blame God or give Him the glory for that one. We deserve it!

If we suffer unjustly because of obeying our Lord's Word, then we can praise Him for it.

Am I complaining, suffering shame, and asking why, or, am I glorifying God for the test?

What should I do about the suffering?

- Fight back? • Get 'em?
- **TURN MYSELF OVER TO THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE AND FAITHFUL CREATOR?**

What are you going to do about it?