

**TITLE: "No Strangers to Suffering" (Part 1)**

**PASSAGE: 1 Peter 4:12**

**THEME: *Pearls of Joy in an Ocean of Pain: Finding Joy in Suffering***

**NUMBER: 09091Pe4.12(93)**

**DATE: September 19, 2009**

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{{Read 1 Peter 4:12-19}}

[i] Revisiting the theme of "Suffering"

Theme that goes all t/way back to t/introduction to 1 Peter. We noted then that the theme of the book was "Hope for the Hurting."

[ii] That very 1<sup>st</sup> week I began by reminding you that we are all different

We're like snowflakes – no 2 of us is alike. We don't dress t/same way // all act same way. We may like different music – even in t/CH (always a thorn of contention in t/CH - musical styles/preferences). // Our backgrounds are different // hobbies // personalities.

Beauty of t/CH is that w/all of these diffs. we come together w/one thing in common - We are all part of one body - the body of JC. We all have as our ambition to know Him and make Him known. There is a unity in our diversity.

[ii] But there is one other thing we share in common

We all know what it's like to hurt. I quoted Joseph Parker, a great preacher of t/past who told a group of aspiring pastors ==>

“preach to t/hurting and you will never lack for a congregation. There's a broken heart in every pew.”

As Swindoll once said - “suffering is the common thread in all our garments.” (Swindoll, Hope Again, 12).

[iii] In chapter 1 verse 1 we read that Peter writes to the chosen strangers who were scattered throughout Asia Minor

An essential thing we need to know is that these “scattered strangers” were going through a difficult time of suffering and persecution. They knew what it was like to hurt.

In fact, at least 15 times in this letter, Peter refers to their suffering & he uses 8 diff. Gk. words to do so.

[iv] 1:6-9

**In this you rejoice . . .**

Question: "In what?" Answer ==> Entire context of vv. 3-5.

We labeled this passage "Elements of the S.J. of our Salvation"

The first such element ==>

Was Prompted by God's Great Mercy (3a) ==>

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ACCORDING TO HIS GREAT MERCY has caused us to be born again . . .**

No commands in t/Bible to B b.a. God does this – he caused us to be B.A. That's what we call "regeneration" – it's the power of t/HS overshadowing t/darkness of our sinfulness resulting in faith & salvation.

W/Faith and Salvation comes Sovereign Joy – the joy that is freely given to we who believe.

Gives us Hope (other half of v. 3) ==>

**"... to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**

Hope is wrapped in an inheritance (v. 4) ==>

**to an inheritance [that is] incorruptible and undefiled and unfading which is kept in heaven for you . . .**

That inheritance is Preserved by God's Power (5a)

**[you] . . . are being guarded by the power of God, through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

Guarded through present faith for a final salvation (glorification).

**In [all of] this you greatly rejoice . . .** (PT = "You are rejoicing")

Not the common word for Joy ( $\chi\alpha\rho\alpha$ ) -  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\lambda\lambda\iota\alpha\omega$  - A word that's always used in NT to describe great or lively joy. Could call it "salvation joy."

Used of Mary in her "magnificat" of Luke 1 (**my soul exalts the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior**)

Joy t/Philippian Jailer experienced when he found salvation (Acts 16:34).

Used in LXX to translate Psalm 51:12 (**restore to me the joy of my salvation**).

Something else we see is that the Sovereign Joy of Our Salvation will evidence itself by a faith that perseveres

Five characteristics of this persevering faith . . .

**1. A Persevering Faith That:**

**a. Results in Joy (6a)**

**b. Stands the Test of Trials (6b-7)**

**c. Loves The Lord (whom we have not seen) (8a)**

**d. Believes in The Lord (whom we don't see) (8b)**

**e. Is the Means to Final Salvation (9)**

There's "Joy" verse 6 - but note the contrast in what follows ==>

**. . . though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,**

"Trials" not "temptations" (KJV - bad translation). Word *πειρασμος* can mean either so t/context est. t/meaning.

Looks backward and forward ==>

**In this you rejoice** (*looking back to the blessings of vv. 3,4,5*) **though now** (*in the present*) . . . **you [suffer grief with] various trials,**

Peter wastes no time in getting to the topic of suffering . . . Suffering for all men, including t/believer in JC is unavoidable.

Note in that regard t/little phrase in middle of v. 6 (it is necessary) ==> 1<sup>st</sup> class condition in t/Gk. Assumed to be true. IOW "It is necessary!" It's part of life. Picture of Xnty as being a relationship w/God whereby you are exempted from all the pain of sin is a lie from t/pit of hell!

Listen - if it were true that Xns were somehow excused from pain & suffering why does John give us t/hope of eternal reward when he writes of t/Kingdom in Rev. 21:4 being a place where==>

**. . . [God] shall wipe away every tear . . . and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain . .**

John writes as if it were a given - Will be pain & suffering in this life.

Here's the big but (pun unintended) . . . Here's the big difference ==>  
As a Xn you never go through t/trials of life, t/pain, t/sadness,  
t/affliction, alone. You never go through these things w/o purpose.

Suffering can never finally and ultimately be meaningless, because God himself has shared in our suffering. [Philip Yancey]

That's the cross! Shaped like a dagger and planted into t/heart of t/earth dripping w/the life-blood of t/Son of God!

That's t/hope – the living hope of t/resurrection of JC from t/dead (v. 3).

It's not the capricious whims of chance that move the happenings of t/universe, it's the loving hand of your father who holds you close even when life hurts. You can have joy in that. Peace.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 8 ==>

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

That's what Peter means here==>

**. . . though now FOR A LITTLE WHILE, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,**

Truth is that we don't have to go through difficult times forever. We may find that a bad day turns into a week of bad days or weeks of bad days or months of bad days. Even years! But in light of eternity it is just "a little while." The time is short (may not feel like it when you're going through it!) t/time is short & t/best days are ahead. It will pass.

Interesting how Peter begins and ends his letter on this same note. Same phrase that's used here is used in the same way in 5:10==>

And after you have suffered **FOR A LITTLE WHILE**, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

That's not t/only time Peter addresses suffering . . .

[v] 2:18 ff.

We are slaves of the Suffering Servant who are to strive for satisfaction in our sufferings since He suffered for us.

As I said back then, I don't have a problem with the beginning or end {cite}. It's the middle part that we wrestle with.

What does it mean to {cite} ???

It doesn't mean that life is easy // we are outwardly happy when things seem to fall apart // spiritual masochists who derive great pleasure from self-flagellation. It doesn't even mean that tragedies aren't still in some way tragedies.

It means that in t/midst of life's storms, for t/child of God, there can be peace in t/midst of suffering. One can find contentment. The hurricane may still be there, you may still feel t/violence of t/storm, t/thunder, t/raging wind, t/surf of one's circumstances furiously pounding against your life. But t/eye comes & in t/midst of all your worries there is a degree of peace knowing that this storm isn't driven by t/winds of chance, but by t/hand of God who will sustain you through it all.

In so doing there can be joy and God is glorified, the CH encouraged.

Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence – We cast ourselves upon the sustaining grace of His sovereignty.

That's something we looked at 2 or 3 weeks ago. We see it here ==>

Look at verse 21 ==>

**For you have been called for this [purpose] . . .**

Literally, "You have been called for this" (what?) ==> For suffering!

That's the context, isn't it? Why t/verse goes on to say ==>

**. . . since Christ also suffered on your behalf leaving for you an example so that you might follow in His steps . . .**

Suffer like He did. He was called to suffer and so are you.

"Called" = καλεω \* Verb: Aorist Passive. Culminative aorist (perfective force). IOW - it's translated like t/perfect tense, "You have been called." You were called in t/past & that calling is relevant to your life and situation now. That's t/idea.

No Christian suffers by accident ==> God has a design for each life & that includes even t/circumstances of OUR suffering.

**[vi] Emphasis that we see time and again is that our suffering isn't caused by our own sinful actions**

2:12 {cite}

2:19-20 {cite}

3:9-12 {cite}

3:13-14 {cite}

3:16-17 {cite}

There are those who suffer, professed and real Xns, because of their own sinful actions. "Reaping and sowing."

See this all the time.

People who are lazy and won't work – they suffer because of their lack, but that's not t/kind of suffering that's blessed by God – the suffering is caused by their sinful attitudes.

Galatians 6:7-9 **7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.**

4:15-16 {cite}

Doesn't mean that if you sin & repent God won't bless you. We're thankful for His grace! It does mean that you may yet be afflicted w/the consequences of your sin.

[vii] Last place we see Peter address suffering is with his closing words of chapter 5 {read vv. 6-11}

But before we get there, we have to finish chapter 4 ==> brings us to our text.

***1. Pearls of Joy in an Ocean of Pain: Finding Joy in Suffering (12-19)***

Four Main points will carry us through the end of chapter 4

*How can we find Joy in t/Midst of Suffering?*

*A. We Must Expect to Suffer (12)*

*B. We Must Fellowship in the Sufferings of Christ (13-14)*

*C. We Must Suffer for the Right Reasons (15-16)*

*D. We Must Persevere Knowing that Heaven and Hell Stand in the Balance (17-19)*

## *I. Pearls of Joy in an Ocean of Pain: Finding Joy in Suffering*

*A. We Must Expect to Suffer (12)*

### *1. "The Great Lie of Christian Ease"*

This lie comes in various forms. Might be "You want a happy, fulfilled life w/no problems – Give Jesus a try" \*\* "God wants you to be happy and healthy and even wealthy" \*\* "God would never bring pain into your life" \*\* "Get eternal life by saying a prayer and don't sweat the details of being a slave of JC following Him wherever He may lead."

God does not call us to ease, to laziness, to focus on this life as if eternity doesn't matter and our happiness hinges on all that we can accomplish in t/brief span of our life on this earth.

God calls us to holiness, to humility, to hard work, to service, to self-denial, and to suffering.

## *I. Pearls of Joy in an Ocean of Pain: Finding Joy in Suffering? (12-19)*

*A. We Must Expect to Suffer (12)*

### *2. Suffering is God's Will for Those Whom He Loves*

a. Ἀγαπητοῦ (also used in 2:11)

**Beloved . . .**

It's a word that, according to BAG, "[Inclines] strongly toward the meaning 'only beloved'

You are not only God's "chosen race; royal priesthood; holy nation; people for his own possession" you are also his "only beloved."

A reminder that God deeply loves you w/his covenantal love.

A love that marked you out for salvation B4 you were even born, in eternity past, as God t/Father in His Plan for His Purposes foreknew you, sent His Son to die for you even B4 He created you & called you to salvation.

This is a reminder for Peter's audience (for us) that Suffering is God's Will for those Whom He loves.

You have been granted not only to believe, but to suffer (Phil. 1:29).

1 Thess. 3:3-4 - 3 . . . for you yourselves know that we have been destined for [affliction]. 4 For indeed when we were with you, we {kept} telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

"In the total expanse of human life there is not a single square inch of which the Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare,'That is mine!'" – Abraham Kuyper [Dutch Theologian]

**Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you . . . as though some strange thing were happening to you.**

Don't be surprised. Don't think it strange. It's not unusual, it doesn't mean that God has forgotten you – He loves you.

**b. Note how Peter describes suffering ==>**

**... the fiery ordeal ...**

**(1) A descriptive term for suffering borrowed from the O.T.**

Proverbs 27:21 **The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, And a man is tested by the praise accorded him.**

Psalms 66:10 **For Thou hast tried us, O God; Thou hast refined us as silver is refined.**

Word is πυρώσις - (LXX above & here) – used of a furnace where gold or silver would be purified.

The purpose of trials and suffering in our lives. We see that purpose in t/middle of t/verse ==>

**... which comes upon you for your testing ...**

**3. Suffering is for our Testing, our Good, and God's Glory**

1:7 **that the proof of your faith, {being} more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

As a Xn you never go through t/trials of life, t/pain, t/sadness, t/affliction, alone. You never go through these things w/o purpose.

**... for your testing ...**

OT. Patriarch Job, in t/book named for him 23:10 **"But He knows the way I take; {When} He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.**

a. Turn to James 1:2-12 {go through vv. 2-12}

"You must submit to supreme suffering in order to discover the completion of joy" – John Calvin

176<sup>th</sup> c. Scottish Presbyterian Samuel Rutherford said of affliction, "The Great King keeps His wine there." (it is in the cellar of affliction, not the rooftop of ease)

C.H. Spurgeon said, "They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls."

*I. Pearls of Joy in an Ocean of Pain: Finding Joy in Suffering*