

TITLE: "No Strangers to Suffering" (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 4:15-19

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

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

Of the many prophecies concerning t/coming of X in t/O.T. we find as a common theme that He would be a man of suffering.

Psa. 22 - he would be despised and mocked

Psa. 2 - Leaders would conspire against him

Isa. 53 He would be a man of sorrows acquainted with grief

When we come to t/Gospels, the N.T. books that chronicle his birth, life, death, resurrection, we find that suffering and affliction were his constant companions.

JC - t/Creator of all was mocked & criticized by t/very men he not only created, but came to save!

He was a first hand witness to t/many facets of suffering that are common to us all.

He came to earth as a man to enter into the sufferings of men. He saw through t/tears of human eyes t/devastating wages of sin ==>

* sickness and disease were everywhere

* he saw t/paralyzing effects of fear and anxiety

* he entered into a world of depression & sorrow

* he knew t/gnawing effects of poverty

* he was no stranger to grief (he was born w/eyes that weep)

Jesus knew what it meant to be lonely, to be falsely accused // friends turn against him. To feel deserted and forsaken.

A man of sorrows acquainted w/grief!

Yet, there was joy. Hebrews 12:2 – the joy set before Him in enduring t/cross even though he despised its shame.

Here we are - his disciples – 1 Peter 2:21 – He suffered for us and left us an example that we should follow in his steps.

We like Paul can say, "I want to know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death that I too might be resurrected from the dead."

This has been a constant theme of 1 Peter. It's a book about suffering. We saw it in chapt. 1 // chapt. 2 // chapt. 3 // we see it here in chapt. 4.

In this life we will experience pain.

Our pain is to be tempered by the joy of suffering in Christ as we persevere in doing good, knowing that one day our joy will be made complete.

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

A. We Must Expect to Suffer (12)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

Implication is that we are prepared to suffer.

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.

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.

1. Ἀγαπητοί

Beloved . . . (cf. 2:11) - '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."

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.

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

But in the degree you share in the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

1. We share in (fellowship) in the sufferings of Christ

Even as our lives are joined with his, we experience fellowship of His suffering.

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

If you are reviled for the name of Christ [we are] you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Jesus in Matthew 5:11 ==> "Blessed are you when {men} cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

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

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)

1. To be born into this life is to be born unto suffering

We congratulate parents on having a child. What a blessing (it is!). We look at the potential of that life & the years it has laying before it. We forget that this child is also born to suffer.

We congratulate students when they graduate from H.S. or College. You're young, you're an adult. You have your whole life in front of you. But we don't make mention that the way they live as an adult will unfold w/much suffering.

a. Everyone is born into sin

We're not only subject to our own sin, we're subject to the sin of others. We're subject to living in a sin-cursed universe - reminder of t/scope of sin. You can't escape it. Go to the bottom of t/deepest ocean If you could travel light years to t/furthest galaxy . . . the law of sin would remain. Can't escape it!

2. We as believers are to be sure that we suffer for the right reasons – something Peter emphasizes by way of a negative:

Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evil doer or a busybody.

3. Peter lists 4 areas or categories of sin here

a. The first 2 - murder and robbery - were capital crimes

Peter lists these two offenses to develop a contrast, not because he fears that we as Christians are going to turn to murder or thievery.

b. The second two offenses are more general in nature

Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief OR an evil doer or a busybody.

c. "Evil doer" – NIV "any other kind of criminal" – noun
κακοποιὸς

Compound of two words, κακος (evil) + ποιεω - (to do) == Lit. "to do evil" – General term that encompasses all crimes.

It's a word that Peter alone uses (2:12 and 2:14).

d. Then Peter adds lastly ==>

. . . or a busybody.

That's interesting!

Peter goes from murder, to robbery, to being an evil-doer, to being a plain ol' busybody. Seems out of place in the list.

The word Peter uses here is quite rare, I think Peter is the first to use it in antiquity.

The word comes from two Greek words: ἀλλοτριος (belonging to another) and επίσκοπος (overseer). Describes someone who oversees the affairs or business of another person (negative way). A meddler.

4. Xns can do evil and they can be meddlers

Xns do suffer because of their own sinful choices. No one likes a busybody.

We need to heed 1 Thess. 4:11 ==>

and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you;

5. Cf. Titus 2:15-3:11

15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. ****Remind them**** to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. 9 But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

6. While we suffer because of sin in general we must not suffer for our own sin in particular

Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evil doer or a busybody.

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

7. Here's the contrast in verse 16

But if [any of you suffers] as a Christian . . .

a. As a Χριστιανός – word that means "a follower of Christ"

Used 2x in t/book of Acts and here in 1 Peter. Wasn't a title that Xns themselves coined; it was a negative term used of Xns. A term of derision or reproach.

As far as the Roman world was concerned, the followers of X were akin to anarchists.

The state religion of the Roman Empire was "The Cult of Caesar." The Roman emperor was to be worshiped as a god. Under Caesar all t/diverse people in t/Empire were united as one. Loyalty.

The Greek word for Caesar is *Kaisar*. Those who worshiped the Kaisar were called *Kaisarianos*.

Along comes Christianity – a rival claimant to world worship and dominion. The God of Christianity, JC, was t/One who would some day come back and take the government of the world upon His shoulders. And those who worshiped Him as God were called *Christianos*, worshipers of the Christ as against the *Kaisar*, worshipers of the Caesar.

Xns weren't only a threat to t/sinful ethics of society, they were a threat to the government!

This is why ==> {2:12-17}

Rome saw that the imperialism of Christianity was challenging the imperialism of the Caesars and that it was by its propagation, striking at the vitals of the empire. [Rome] answered this [with] . . . ten bloody persecutions. It meant and cost something to be a *Christianos*." [Wuest]

But if [any of you suffers] as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

As t/second-century Apologists (defenders) of Christianity, would say, "The only charge on which true Christians were ever to be convicted was the charge of being a Christian."

3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Paul and Silas in Acts 5 who were imprisoned and beaten on behalf of Christ and they left that experience rejoicing that they were considered worthy to so suffer for His name.

To paraphrase Calvin's thoughts on this passage ==>

"All afflictions come from sin. So we ought to look at it this way: I deserve to suffer the due consequences of my sin, but X has taken that upon Himself for me. Now, as a Christian, he asks me to suffer not for my sin but for righteousness sake, for in His eyes I am innocent. Let me, therefore, glorify God."

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Fourthly ==>

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

Jonathan Edwards, perhaps America's greatest theologian, wrote a series of 70 resolutions that he read as daily reminders of his duty before God.

On July 8th, 1723 he wrote resolution # 55 ==>

Resolved, to endeavor to my utmost to act as I can think I should do, if I had already seen the happiness of heaven, and hells torments.

Wesley put it this way ==>

"I desire to have heaven and hell forever in my eyes--to live upon this tiny isthmus of life between those two great and boundless oceans."

So we must persevere in life and persevere in suffering knowing that heaven and hell stand in the balance.

Two principles in that regard ==>

1. God's People May Suffer First and Most, but not Last and Longest (17-18)

For [it is] time for judgement to begin from the house of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what will [be the] end of those who are disobedient to Gospel of God?

1. God's People May Suffer First and Most, but not Last and Longest (17-18)

a. Remember - Peter wrote this letter to Christians scattered around Asia Minor

1:1 – he writes to those in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Wayne Grudem notes that he writes to 10 or more major churches with other readers in other local churches that had come out of them.

(1) Question Peter's readers may have been asking is this:
'Why are God's people suffering and evildoers going unpunished?'

(a) This is the age old question isn't it?!

In 1981 the Jewish Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a book that spent 8 months on the NYT's best seller list: "When Bad Things Happen to Good People"

He addresses the age-old question, but doesn't come to grips with the fact that there are no "good people" from the perspective of God's holiness, only sinful, fallen, depraved people deserving His wrath.

(b) But we can adjust the question to this:

"Why do those whom God has redeemed and calls His own suffer?"
"Why do we as Xns— as those who are devoted followers of JC, as those who's sins have been forgiven by His grace— why do we suffer?"

"Why does an utter pagan like Hugh Hefner continue to live into his 80s when righteous men and women live lives of perpetual suffering and die early deaths?"

Why do the wicked rule and the righteous suffer in nations like Iran and Somalia, where Somali Islamists have declared: "we will slaughter Christians" - "Somalis are 100% Muslim and will always remain so?"

(2) The answer? It comes down to one's perspective

1. God's People May Suffer First and Most, but not Last and Longest (17-18)

For [it is] time for judgement to begin from the house of God . . .

(a) This judgement connects to verse 12 "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you"

The F.O. is God's judgement. But not His condemnation.

The word is κριμα. The word for condemnation is κατακριμα. Κριμα refers to judgement in general.

It's a broader term that can be used of judgement in the sense of testing. A test that will result in an evaluation. A judgement which may issue in approval or disapproval.

That's one of the purposes of trials and suffering in our lives – 1:6b-9
{cite}

Our pain is to be tempered by the joy of suffering in Christ as we persevere in doing good, knowing that one day our joy will be made complete.

"The picture is that God has begun judging within the church, and will later move outward to judge those outside the church. The refining fire of judgement is leaving no one untouched, but Christians are being purified and strengthened by it - sins are being eliminated and trust in God and holiness of life are growing." [Grudem, 181]

(b) Peter is making allusion to another O.T. passage

When Peter says ==>

...[it's] time for judgement to begin (lit.) from the house of God...

he uses a phrase "house of God" that was always used to refer to the Temple in the O.T. (LXX).

(c) Connection is to Ezek. 9

In Ezekiel 9 – t/Prophet Ezekiel receives a prophetic vision from t/Lord. Remember, Ezekiel writes in the 6th c. BC. He was taken captive along w/his countrymen when Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian King, captured t/southern K.D. of Judah. Ezekiel was a prophetic voice to t/Hebrew captives in Babylon.

In chapter nine he has a vision in which he sees t/Lord calling 'Executioners' of judgement" come upon Jerusalem to judge her for her sins.

One messenger of God puts a mark on the forehead of all who were found to 'sigh and groan' over the 'abominations' committed in Jerusalem (9:4-5).

Then the executioners of judgement are told to kill all who do not have the mark on their foreheads (9:5-6).

God tells the executioners, 'Begin from my sanctuary,' and Ezekiel adds. 'So they began from the elders who were inside the house' (9:6). The words 'begin from', used twice here, are the same words Peter uses to say that it is time for judgement to 'begin from' the 'house of God'. Same wording in both places.

Something else that's fascinating is in Ezek. the judgement begins with 'the elders' who are in God's house. What does Peter turn to next in chapter 5? 'Therefore, I exhort the elders among you . . .'

It seems very likely that the judgement scene of Ezekiel 9 is in Peter's mind when he writes, indicating that God's judgement will begin with God's house (now the church; cf. note at 2:5) and then spread outward to destroy all unbelievers.

It begins first with God's people. Then it extends to the unregenerate. God first judges the sheep and then the goats.

The judgment of God which comes upon believers is to test and refine their faith not to condemn them. It is an expression of his love not his wrath.

The same act of judgment can be purifying love for believers and punishing wrath for unbelievers. When God's judgment comes upon the earth, it will begin with the church and end with the unbelievers. But for the church it will be the first of purifying love and for the unbelievers it will be the fires of punishing wrath.

(d) Note the contrast in the middle of the verse

. . . and if [it begins] with us first, what will [be the] end of those who are disobedient to Gospel of God?

i. Disobedient to the Gospel of God again is to disbelieve the Gospel

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

For those who refuse to bow the knee in obedience to JC their end will be an eternal judgement.

JC Himself will appear in flaming fire to deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. – 2 Thess. 1:8.

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

1. God's People May Suffer First and Most, but not Last and Longest (17-18)

b. For emphasis Peter asks another rhetorical question in v. 18

(1) Verse 18 is a quote from the LXX of Proverbs 11:31

And, IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS BEING SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER?

(2) This isn't calling into question the security of our salvation

In saying that the righteous are saved w/difficulty, Peter is not saying that there should be doubt. This is not the Romanist doctrine of works.

17th c. Scottish Presbyterian Robert Leighton ==>

"This does not mean the end result is in doubt. It means that there are great difficulties on the way—fightings without and fears within."

D. We Must Persevere Knowing that Heaven and Hell Stand in the Balance (17-19) We have an eternal perspective.

ACT 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

We are those who enter by the narrow gate // who die daily // counted it all loss for the sake of X // fellowship in His sufferings.

We persevere even if it means that this life is filled with sorrow, knowing that at the revelation of His glory we will rejoice with exaltation!

Answer to the question Peter asks ==>

... WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER?

Is self-evident. He will be judged for his sin and condemned to eternity in hell.

"Why do we not consider our proud, unpurified condition and tremble before the Lord? We must put a right construction on all God's dealings with his church and with our souls. With regard to God's church, there may be a time when you will see it not only tossed but, to your way of thinking, covered and swallowed up with tears. But wait a little, and it will arrive safely. This is a common stumbling-stone, but walk by the light of the Word and the eye of faith looking on it, and you will pass by and not stumble. We read about Joseph hated, sold, and imprisoned, and all most unjustly; yet within a few pages we find him freed and exalted, and his brothers coming to ask for his help, and we are satisfied. But when we look on things that at the moment are cloudy and dark, our shortsighted, hasty spirits cannot learn to wait a little to see the other side and what end the Lord makes. We see that judgement begins with the family of God, and this perplexes us if we do not

remember that if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? God begins the judgement on his church for a short time, that it may end and rest on his enemies forever."
[Leighton]

MacArthur draws this contrast ==>

"It was hard for Jesus to be the Savior because of the immeasurable pain He endured from exposure to this sinful world and His having to be under the curse of God for all the sins of all who would ever believe. If it was with excruciating difficulty that He gave himself to redeem sinners, and with painful difficulty that redeemed endure to their final glory, does anyone think the godless man and the sinner, who has lived his life without suffering for righteousness' sake (because he is unrighteous), will simply die and go out of existence or be given a place in heaven because God is nothing but loving and forgiving? That is a foolish thought. Peter is saying the ungodly's eternal suffering, compared to the godly's temporal suffering, is far greater."

2TH 1:9 **And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,**
PSA 1:4-5 **4 The wicked . . . are like chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**

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Two Principles ->

1. God's People May Suffer First and Most, but not Last and Longest(17-18)

2. God's People are to Entrust Themselves to Him in Well-Doing (19, cf. 5:10)

Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing good.

a. This is a one verse summary of the entire epistle of 1 Peter
Therefore . . . == "In light of all that I have said"

. . . let those also who suffer according to the will of God . . .

b. What's the will of God? Threefold:

- 1) That you suffer (you have been called for this purpose, 2:21);
- 2) That you suffer for the right reasons (for doing what is right, not wring, 3:17, not as a criminal or a busybody, 4:15);
- 3) That you suffer well – you persevere in suffering to the glory of God knowing that – 5:10 {cite}

Those 3 facets of God's will in your suffering are conjoined in this 1 v.:
. . . let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing good.

Entrust your soul to Him. It's a banking term that means "to give to someone for safe-keeping." Same word Jesus used when he cried out from the cross as he expired: **'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit'**

It's to follow in the example of X in 2:23 when it says that he suffered **he kept on entrusting himself to Him who judges righteously.**

And entrusting yourself to Him, do good. Walk by faith. Trust in Him with all your heart, not depending on your own understanding. But acknowledge Him in all your ways and He will direct your way.

At the height of one of his own personal suffering, J. Hudson Taylor the founder of the China Inland Mission, said this:

"It doesn't matter how great the pressure is. What really matters is where the pressure lies. whether it comes between me and God or whether it presses me nearer His heart."

God does not allow His children to wallow in comfortable mediocrity. He will discipline you // he will move you out of your comfort zones // he will buffet you about – that you might be pressed nearer to His heart and that you might be a sharper tool in His hand.

As we come to a close, turn w/me to Psalm 31 (A record of David's entrusting himself to a faithful Creator). {read}

Earlier, in answering the question of suffering, I said it comes down to a matter of perspective. D.A. Carson, not only a top-notch N.T. scholar, but also a writer of poetry and songs, wrote a poem entitled "Perspectives". It's a poem that looks at sin, pain & suffering from the perspective of t/Cross. It goes like this ==>

The hurts of a grim, weary world, the greeds of an all-selfish race,
The barbs fueled with malice and hurled by men void of vision
and grace;

The children who die without food, still others ripped out
from the womb,

Cheap culture defended as good near ghettos of filth,
rats and gloom;

Armed missiles with power to melt the shiny new toys that we buy,
The alien fear that is felt by people too guilty to die;

The endless, vain idols of men, the worship of fleeting applause,
The dollar, the Deutschemark, the yen, as bases of wisdom and laws;
Religion that pampers to self, and cares not a whit for the damned,
The elderly put on the shelf, and truth manufactured and canned –
O Christ! these are ugly, deep stains and festering sores.

To gaze at Golgotha provides unshakable vantage of view;
Creator of time in its tides; the Judge standing under review;
The incarnate Lover, alone; bright Glory enshrouded in gray;
Perfection that wills to atone; and Grace by rejection repaid;
Yet forward our gaze is drawn , too; Spectacular vistas are spread:
The Living One whom we once slew now speaks, and his voice
wakes the dead;
And him we scorned sits to receive the worship that is but his due;
And him we thought false, we perceive to be titled
The Faithful and True;
The Crucified now stands as Judge; his justice no man can gainsay;
And only his death can expunge the multiplied sins of our way;
The earth and its heav'n cannot stand before his pure, unshaded light;
But these are remade by his hand, evoking unbounded delight;
The dark shades are no longer seen, and untainted purity reigns;
And gracing the whole is a stream of unbroken, unrestrained praise.

Grant, gracious Saviour, we pray, perspectives
as seen from your throne:
Our world and our deep, wicked way, yet cherished
and not left alone:
Between the glad grief of the Cross, and cosmic renewal to come,
To serve you afresh at all cost, to sing now eternity's song.