

4 Biblical Responses to Suffering

1 Peter 4:12-19

(preached Pine Grove 1/26/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter 4:12.

I want to read from verse 12 to the end of the chapter in here 19..

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; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled [j]for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a [k]troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin [l]with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, [m]what will become of the godless man and the sinner? 19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to

the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Let us pay.

Feb 4 2020 will mark the 465th anniversary of the death of John Rogers.

Now, there will be no moments of silence in the world for the anniversary of his death.

In fact, most in the church have no idea who John Rogers, but if you are holding an English Bible tonight, you owe a huge debt of gratitude to him.

Because John Rogers along with William Tyndale worked hard to translate the Bible into the English language.

In fact, Rogers work on the English Bible was central to him being declared a heretic by the Catholic church.

So he was arrested and on Feb 4, 1555 Rogers was marched to the stake to be burned to death.

As he walked along, his wife and 11 children walked alongside him encouraging him to die for the truth of Scripture.

As he was tied to the stake, one of the officers asked Rogers if he would like to recant of his belief that the Catholic mass was not biblical.

Rogers replied, "That which the Bible teaches, I will seal with my own blood."

The officer replied, "Well, then you are a heretic."

To which Rogers replied, "We shall see at the day of judgment."

To which the officer replied, "If that be your view, I will never pray for you."

And Rogers replied, "So be it. But I will now pray for you."

Rogers was then set afire as he quoted a psalm.

According to witnesses, As Rogers arms caught fire, he put his hands together and appeared to be washing his hands.

As the flames spread onto his shoulders, he raised his hands to heaven until they were burned to a crisp outside of Smithfield England.

Rogers would be the first English martyr to die under the reign of Queen Mary, who became known as Bloody Mary due to all the Protestants she executed.

Here is picture of John Rogers, and here is picture of his execution.

Now that is but one story of 1000s of stories in church history where believers have died for their faith.

But this is no surprise if you are a student of Scripture.

In John 15:18, Jesus told the disciples,..

18 “If the world hates you, [e]you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

And that hate for believers showed up really fast after Jesus left this world.

In fact, Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit descended 10 days later.

We read about that in Acts 1.

In Acts 2, Peter preaches the first sermon in church history and in Acts 4, he and the other disciples are arrested.

And that hatred for the church continues until today.

And why are we hated?

Because we love Christ.

Because we obey Christ.

Because we affirm the truth of Scripture.

Because we believe in a God of judgment.

Because we say that there is one way to heaven.

I was listening to an interview with Aaron Rodgers, who is the quarterback for the Green Bay Packers.

He grew up in a Christian home, but in college, he said that he came to reject Christianity.

His reason?

It is too black and white.

He said the idea of absolute right and wrong didn't work for him.

He wanted to believe in something that didn't teach heaven and hell as the only options.

So now he is simply on a spiritual journey, which is simply another name for the broad road to destruction.

But this is how the world views believers.

We are these simple minded people who see everything as black and white and leave no room for option 3.

I would remind Aaron Rodgers that Jesus was not an option 3 kind of man.

He always spoke in terms of option 1 or option 2.

Follow me or not.

Believe in me or not.

Obey me or not.

But the world today hates that Jesus, so they reject Him and all those who believe in Him.

And the church feels that hatred every day.

So how do we endure?

How do we find joy despite the hatred and persecution of the world?

Well, 1 Peter is our source of encouragement because 1 Peter was written to suffering Christians in the 1st century but the help it provides goes to any believer in any age.

If you are suffering because of the world's persecution or because of other trials in life, you can find hope in this letter.

Tonight, we are going to finish up chapter 4 which is a chapter that has connected our sufferings with the sufferings of Christ.

And the point of connecting our sufferings to Christ is the to encourage and motivate us to endure sufferings in the same way that Christ did.

By seeing our suffering as the gateway to future glory.

Christ suffered the shame of the cross because he knew it would provide a way to heaven for Him and all who would believe in Him.

So let's wrap this chapter up with what we will call 4 biblical responses to sufferings.

The first biblical response to suffering is probably the most important.

Look at verse 12.

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;

So the first response to suffering is to expect it.

I. Expect it (12)

As Tonya and I grow older, it is really hard to surprise her with a gift, and the reason for that is how far technology has come.

For instance, I can go to a store and make a purchase with my debit card and she can text me on the way home and say, “what did you just buy at Dollar General?”

Even if I want to get cash out to conceal where I buy a gift, she will ask what did you need that \$100 for?

So now we just pick out what we want online, purchase it and act surprised when we open it.

In the same way, trials in life shouldn't come as a surprise the believer.

In fact, Paul says don't think that trials and persecution are something strange or unusual to the believer.

Now this is one of the reasons why the Bible never supports the health and wealth gospel, which says that salvation brings health and wealth and prosperity.

As if that is the to be expected at salvation.

Let me tell you something church.

It would more unusual for someone to get saved and to get rich than it would be for someone to get saved and go broke.

The norm for believers is suffering and persecution and trials.

And why is that?

Well, they did it to Jesus, but also note that trials are for our testing.

In other words, trials reveal the authenticity of our faith.

This is the opening of the book of James.

James 1:2-4.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various [c]trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces [d]endurance. 4 And let [e]endurance have its perfect [f]result, so that you may be [g]perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Suffering and persecution and trials are fires that reveal the purity of our faith.

Peter even calls these trials, “fiery ordeals.”

As you know, anyone can say anything they want to say about the Lord.

And many people make professions of faith in Christ.

So how do we know who is telling the truth?

Simple.

See how they fare during and after a trial in their life.

The ones who hold onto their faith during and after trouble are the ones whose words were true.

Those who leave their supposed faith behind were the phonies.

This is the why the American is so fat with unbelievers.

We don’t feel real persecution here, and that has allowed “hot air Christians” to find a place in the church.

And what I mean by “hot air Christians” are those whose profession of Christ was nothing more than hot air.

Now I will say that this is changing in the church here as homosexuality and transgenderism are becoming more accepted.

The result of their acceptance is bad for society but good for the church because the culture will continue to turn against the church.

And Christians will feel the heat of that.

Some will stay with Scripture and prove their faith to be genuine and many will go, proving that their Christianity was never real.

Now as Peter wrote this letter, the heat was government oriented persecution from the Roman emperor Nero.

So the source of the persecution and trials can vary, but the response is the same for true believers.

WE expect trouble in this world.

We aren't surprised by persecution.

In fact, true believers see the persecution as an opportunity to prove that their faith is real and genuine.

Now that leads to reaction #2..

Persecutions are a source of joy for believers..

II. Enjoy it (13-14)

13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing

Not only does suffering provide an opportunity to prove our faith is real, suffering allows us an opportunity to identify with Christ.

In fact, Peter say that we should be happy to be able to experience what our Lord experienced.

In the book of Acts, all the apostles were arrested by the Jews and thrown into prison for preaching Christ.

The Lord opened the doors of the prison and let them out.

They went back out and got back to preaching.

So the Jews had them brought it again planning to have them killed.

But one of the leading Jews talked them out of a death sentence, and simply suggested a beating.

We just saw this verse a few weeks back on Wednesday night.

But look at Acts 5:40-41..

40 They [y]took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to [z]speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. 41 So they went on their way from the presence of the [aa]Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

There is a certain joy that we get when we identify with Christ.

When you forgive, you are like Christ.

When you pray for your enemies and give them the other cheek to strike, you are like Christ.

When you love others, you are like Christ.

And there is also a certain joy in identifying with Him.

The same is true in suffering.

When you suffer unjustly, you are like Christ.

When you do the right thing, but receive the hatred of the world, you are like Christ.

And Peter simply says, enjoy that and rejoice in it.

But that's not all the joy of trials.

They test and reveal the genuineness of your faith.

They allow you to identify with Christ.

But get this.

Suffering now is laying up treasure up treasure in heaven to be revealed at the second coming of Christ.

In the book of Luke, Jesus was motivating the disciples for the difficult road that they walk as his followers..

Here is what he said to them.

Luke 6:20..

20 And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are [j]you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are [k]you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.

There is sense in which your suffering on earth is directly related to your reward in heaven.

Suffer much here and be rewarded much in heaven.

Suffer little here and have little reward in heaven.

Now, don't fear.

The ultimate reward is heaven itself, but there will be rewards for saints who suffered well on earth.

In a sense, every time you suffer and are not deserving of it, make a little tick mark in your head.

Because it is adding to your rewards in heaven.

What an incredible truth to live by.

Suffer now, glory later.

But there is a final reason for joy in suffering.

Look at verse 14..

14 If you are reviled [i]for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

As you suffer for Christ, rest assured that Christ is with you.

Now we know that the Lord is omnipresent.

We know that the Spirit indwells us.

So we are never far from the Lord, but there is a special presence of the Lord in suffering for Him..

Think about Stephen in the book of Acts.

He listens to Peter's preaching.

He puts his faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

He goes and tells his Jewish friends about it, and they drag him out of the synagogue and before the Jewish authorities where he is sentenced to death by stoning.

Stephen is about the first one in the church age killed for his faith in Christ, but as the Jewish authorities sentence him to death, we are told that Stephen had the face of an angel.

And here is how the book of Acts describes his death.

55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the

Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”
57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and
covered their ears and rushed at him with one
impulse. 58 When they had driven him out of the
city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses
laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man
named Saul. 59 They went on stoning Stephen as
he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus,
receive my spirit!” 60 Then falling on his knees,
he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold
this sin against them!” Having said this, he
[ag]fell asleep.

When you suffer for Christ, know that the spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Know that the Lord is near to you in a special way when you suffer for His namesake.

So first of all, expect and enjoy suffering.

And if we stopped right here, this sounds like the best deal ever.

Suffering shows me if my faith is real.

Suffering makes me like Christ.

Suffering allows me to earn rewards in heaven.

And suffering comes with the special presence of the Lord.

So what's the catch?

Well, I am glad you asked..

Look at verse 15, which gives us our third response to suffering, and that is to..

III. Examine it (15-18)

Verse 15..

15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a [k]troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin [l]with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, [m]what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

The catch to all the benefits of suffering is to make sure that you are suffering for Christ in your suffering.

There are many people in the world who suffer but not suffer for the right reasons.

Verse 15 lets us know that murderers suffer, and we would say that they should suffer.

They sinned, so there are consequences.

The same would be true for thieves and evildoers and troublesome meddlers.

And it interesting to note that Peter put meddlers in the same class as thieves and murderers and evil doers.

Yet, people who stir up trouble with their slander or gossip or inability to mind their own affairs are just as evils.

In fact murder and theft and evil doings often being with the meddler, and so the point is clear.

IF you are suffering due to your own sin, none of the above truth applies.

The man sitting if jail for life for murder has a difficult life but it is not due to his suffering for Christ.

It is due to his crime, so he isn't laying up treasure in heaven until he is saved and suffering for that.

So first of all make sure to examine your suffering and identify it as Christian suffering.

Peter goes on to say in verses 16 that Christian suffering brings no shame only glory.

And then in verses 17 and 18, Peter moves from jsut suffering in the unbelieving world to just suffering in the Christian world.

In other words, we know that suffering in the world doesn't bring blessing.

But there is also suffering in the so called believing world that doesn't bring blessing either.

Some suffering of so called Christians is actually judgment.

It is God purging his church as we spoke of earlier.

It is God using suffering to draw a line between belief and unbelief.

And here is the issue, someone in the church may be suffering and they may be claiming that it is unjust suffering.

But the Lord wants to understand that some suffering among professed believers is also just suffering since they have not actually obeyed the gospel.

And then Peter quotes Proverbs 11:13..

18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, [m]what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

The point is simple.

If God goes to great lengths to test his people with suffering to prove the genuine of their faith, can you imagine what HE will do those who are not His?

And the answer is something far worse..

Now let's move to the final verse of 1 Peter 4..

The 4th biblical response to suffering is..

IV. Entrust Your Soul to God (19)

The final repose to suffering is last in the list but the primary one to remember.

And that is to simply remember that God knows what He is doing in and in your life.

If you are a believer and you determine that your suffering is unjust, here is what God is doing.

#1 - He may be allowing you to suffer so that you can see your faith is real and grow in your assurance of salvation.

And how valuable is assurance of salvation?

Incredibly valuable.

#2 - Or God could also be allowing you to suffer so that you can identify with His Son in your suffering.

And the result of that is an increase in your love and appreciation of Christ.

And how valuable is that?

Incredibly valuable.

#3 -Or God could be allowing you to suffer so that you can lay up some treasure and rewards in heaven?

How valuable is treasure in heaven?

Incredibly valuable.

#4 - Or God could be allowing you to suffer so that you can know His presence in a real way on Earth?

And how valuable is that?

Incredibly valuable.

We may avoid suffering, but ultimately suffering for the believer drives them closer to their God.

Peter would tell that it isn't health and wealth that make you love God more, it is suffering.

So let suffering be an opportunity to entrust your soul to the Creator.

Conclusion

Let me end where we started tonight, talking about John Rogers, the English Protestant martyr.

As he waited for his death to sentence to be carried out, he wrote a poem to his family that all of things ensured them that he was ensuring his soul to the Lord.

Here is portion of his it ended.

*Come welcome death the end of fears, I am
prepar'd to die:*

*Those earthly flames will send my soul up to the
Lord on high.*

*Farewell my children to the world, where you
must yet remain;*

*The LORD of hosts be your defence, 'till we do
meet again.*

*Farewell my true and loving wife, my children
and my friends,*

*I hope in heaven to see you all, when all things
have their end.*

*If you go on to serve the LORD, as you have now
begun,*

*You shall walk safely all your days, until your life
be done.*

***GOD grant you so to end your days, as he shall
think it best,
That I may meet you in the heavens, where I do
hope to rest.***

The rest of the story is that Rogers widow went back home to raise her 11 children, one them become a Puritan pastor.

His name was Daniel, and many of his descendants boarded ships and sailed to the New World.

Look, suffering is never desired, but the fire of suffering for now is far better than the lake of fire forever.

May we all be eager to suffer for Christ.

Let us pray.