



FIRST LIGHT CHURCH

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Date: 7/31/2022

Series: Hope In a Hostile World

Text: 1 Peter 4:12-19

BIG IDEA: Trusting God is the reason Christians find joy through suffering.

ICEBREAKER: What is something that was harder than you expected it to be?

CONTEXT: Peter continues the theme of suffering and endurance. He begins a new section in his letter by addressing his recipients as "God's Beloved." However, even though they are loved by God, they are not immune to suffering.

PASSAGE: Have a volunteer read 1 Peter 4:12-19.

DISCUSSION:

1. What purpose does Peter give in verse 12 for the fiery trials in the life of a Christ-follower? How have you experienced this?
2. Why should believers not be surprised when they experience trials and difficulties as they follow Jesus?
3. Peter tells us to rejoice when we suffer for Christ. How is that possible?
4. Not all suffering is for Christ. What kind of suffering does Peter describe in verse 15?
5. What are some ways that Christians may suffer today?
6. God doesn't want us to be ashamed when we suffer for Him. Why might Christians feel shame when they experience suffering?
7. What point is Peter trying to make in verse 17-18 by comparing the hardships and pain God's people experience with the pain that those who reject Christ will experience?
8. Why do you think many Christians don't associate suffering with God's will?
9. Why can we trust God when we suffer? How did Jesus model this?

APPLICATION:

10. What is your biggest takeaway from our discussion, and how will you act on it?

K4 CONNECTION:

We live in a hostile world that will oppose us as we seek to faithfully walk with Jesus. We can be tempted to shrink back or even feel shame when we experience opposition for following Jesus. Peter reminds us to rejoice and count it a blessing to suffer in the name of Christ. As we seek to push back the darkness in our community and help people experience restoration, we can trust God because He is good, He is faithful, and He is in control.

CARE AND PRAY:

- Share any prayer requests and any needs with each other.

COMMENTARY

[v.12] Peter's designation of his readers as "beloved" marks a transition in his letter, much as it did in 2:11. It also serves to remind Christians that the suffering they endure does not mean God has abandoned them or holds them in contempt. All who suffer for righteousness' sake are "beloved" of God!

Whereas non-Christians are "surprised" when believers refuse to join in their debauched behavior (cf. 4:4), Christians must never be "surprised" at the ill behavior of non-Christians toward them (the same word is used in both places). Earlier, in 1:6–7, Peter encouraged his readers as they endured "various trials" designed to test and purify their faith, as if "by fire." Here again the "fiery trial" is far from random and thus is no cause for surprise; it is designed by God to "test" the quality of one's commitment to Christ (in 4:19 he will speak of such suffering as "according to God's will").

[v.13] Instead of showing surprise and resentment when suffering comes, believers are to "rejoice" (from the verb *chairō*). Although in 1:6 a different verb was used (*agalliaō*) to refer to rejoicing despite trials, the sense is the same (in fact, *agalliaō* is used in the second half of 4:13 for the joy Christians will experience at Christ's second coming). The reason for this response is that believers share in the very sufferings of Christ himself. It is not that believers' suffering is redemptive or propitiatory; rather, our suffering is at the hands of those who opposed Christ, as the hostility of the world continues in our day to find its target in those who identify with Him.

The purpose of our rejoicing is so "that" (*hina*) when Christ returns and His glory is revealed (cf. 1:7, 13), we may "rejoice and be glad." Here the verb *chairō* (v. 13a) is intensified and heightened by the participial form of *agalliaō* (cf. the pairing of *agalliaō* with the noun *chara* in 1:8). The rendering "rejoice and be glad" (ESV) suggests an overflow of joy, an experience that goes beyond simple delight. We see here once again (cf. 1:3–7, 13) how our eschatological hope of future grace and glory is brought to bear on our present conduct.

[v.14] There is yet another reason to persevere under persecution. When believers are insulted, mocked, or slandered for their faith (cf. 2:12; 3:9, 14)—that is to say, "for the name of Christ" (cf. Matt. 5:11)—and they embrace it without compromise or cowardice, "the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon" them (a possible allusion to Isa. 11:22).

[v.15-16] The exhortation of verse 15 is largely an echo of what we saw earlier in 2:19–20 and again in 3:13–17 (the only difference being that here Peter provides four concrete examples of sinful behavior).³

Those in the early church did not typically call themselves "Christians" (4:16); this was a designation given to them by others (cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28). But clearly Peter thinks of the label as useful, to be embraced with joy and confidence and never in shame (cf. 1 Pet. 2:6). In fact, it is precisely "in that name," in and for the name of "Christian," a follower of Christ, that we are to suffer and thereby glorify God.

[v.17-18] The latter is here described as the "judgment" of God. This word (*krima*) need not be taken as punitive or penal here (entailing divine wrath) but as disciplinary, with a view to refining and purifying the moral character of "the household of God" (cf. 1:6–7).

Here Peter argues from the lesser to the greater (*a fortiori*). If even those who will finally be saved are purified and judged by suffering, then surely the outcome or result for those who reject and disobey the gospel will be an even greater suffering. To disobey "the gospel of God" (cf. Mark 1:14;

Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8, 9) is to reject its call for repentance and faith in Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 2:8).

“Scarcely” in verse 18 might also be rendered “with difficulty” (cf. Prov. 11:31). Peter is not quoting this proverb in order to argue that God finds it difficult to save us, although the price required in Christ’s blood should never be underestimated. His point is that we, God’s people, must enter through the narrow gate, facing opposition and enduring suffering all along the pathway to glory. God’s mode of bringing His people to their final inheritance is through hard and painful discipline. Again, if sin is so hated in God’s sight that even His children are made to suffer discipline so as to purify their souls, what must be the fate of those who disobey the gospel?

[v.19] The undeserved suffering previously described is “according to God’s will” (as also in 1:6; 2:19–21; 3:17). All suffering passes through God’s hands. Nothing befalls us that He does not permit or use for our ultimate good. The notion of entrusting or committing one’s soul to God recalls the example of Christ himself in 2:23.

God is here called “Creator” to emphasize His complete and comprehensive sovereignty over the lives of His people and all that they encounter. He is also “faithful” to fulfill His promises. He will never forsake us. He will work all things, even suffering, together for our good and His glory. God never wastes the suffering of His children but rather uses it to conform them to Christ.

Commentary taken from the ESV Expository Commentary Series 1 Peter 4:12-19

WHERE’S THE GOSPEL

To “obey the gospel of God” is to set one’s mind and heart on the truth of the finished work of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. What many Christians today mean by “gospel-centeredness” is what Peter here means by “obeying the gospel.” We are spurred on to worship God in holy living, not by human-centered motivations but in grateful response to the good news that was given to us and that is sanctifying us. For this reason, Paul writes in Philippians 3:12, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.” Our knowledge of our identity in Christ drives the way we live (cf. 1 Pet. 4:19).

Sadly, those who do not have this identity face God’s judgment without the grace of Christ’s righteousness to cover them (v. 18); it is a destiny that believers avoid since their judgment was carried out on Christ at the cross. This destiny is worked out practically today, as Peter says, by doing God’s will and entrusting our souls to our faithful Creator (v. 19).

Commentary taken from the ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible 1 Peter 4