

**I PETER 4:7-19**  
**FAITH IN SUFFERING!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Peter chapter 4 as we continue our in-depth study of this letter that Peter wrote to Christians who were scattered for their faith into what we know as modern day Turkey!

We are currently dealing with a section that focuses on – *SUFFERING!*

Not a subject that we like to talk about or deal with and yet, you came back to hear more of what God has to say about this issue of – *SUFFERING!*

But there are those Christians who believe we will not suffer, God has only the best life now for us, and this false teaching is known as the – *PROSPERITY GOSPEL!*

In other words, God wants you rich, powerful, healthy!

But it is not just these health, wealth and prosperity teachers that are promoting this. Yes, they are upfront with it, but many churches today don't want to teach on anything that might seem negative. They just want a positive feel-good message which is great if everything is going great in your life.

But what happens when it doesn't?

What happens when you lose your job, your spouse divorces you, you have no money, you have a life-threatening disease and so on?

That is why we need the whole counsel of God, from Genesis through Revelation because God will deal with those issues of life for us, and He will show us how we are to live out our faith during the most troubling of times!

Even King David had suffering, persecution, difficulty in his life. Many of the Psalms deal with this and how he handled these situations.

When he was cast down, discouraged, he focused back on God which gave him the strength to deal with those difficulties in his life.

Listen to what David wrote in Psalm 61:1-4, **“Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.”**

We see these times in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament!

And the reality is, we all go through times of suffering, of sorrow, of hurt, of pain, of loss and I can go on, but I think you all understand that because you have experienced it in your life!

In our last study we looked at Jesus and how He is our example of how we are to deal with suffering, what we are to do.

In I Peter 3:18 we read, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”**

Jesus did nothing wrong that He should have suffered. Peter says that He was a just man, a perfect man, no sin in Him and yet, He suffered for sinners! He was not focused on self, but His love was focused upon us through all the suffering He went through!

Also, in I Peter 4:1 we are told, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”**

In other words, Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth felt the pain of the scourging, the beatings, the plucking out of His beard, the crucifixion as they drove those spikes into his wrist and feet! He suffered for us, and He is our example in regard to suffering!

I believe that this is an important message because we need to understand how to live out our faith, not only when everything is going well, but especially when it is not going well because people are watching to see if our faith is real.

But what has happened in the church today?

Why do we move away from these teachings?

Let me share this with you because it will give you some insight into what is going on in the church and why the church is not a powerful force in the world like it should be. This world is in darkness, and it needs the light of God to shine brightly!

We are told,

Beginning in the late 1960 s and extending through most of the 1970 s, the evangelical church in North America experienced a renewal and expansion by means of the so-called Jesus movement.

It featured a renewed interest in Bible study, and, as a result, evangelism and discipleship, especially on college and university campuses.

New Scripture translations and paraphrases appeared (e.g., The Living Bible, Good News Bible, New International Version), and other modern translations gained greater acceptance (e.g., Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, New English Bible).

At the same time, evangelical broadcasting, publishing, and music ministries expanded rapidly.

Across the continent, many new independent churches appeared and, along with some existing evangelical churches, experienced rapid numerical growth. Some built larger auditoriums and other facilities, and thus to a degree those churches were precursors of today's megachurches.

However, present-day trends in evangelicalism have departed greatly from those biblically driven days of revival and renewal.

The seeker-sensitive philosophy of church growth, with its spirit of inclusivism and de-emphasis on doctrinal clarity and love for the truth, has imbibed [swallowed] the world's marketing strategy and developed a kind of pop gospel that currently dominates the ecclesiastical landscape.

As it continues to eliminate every bit of offensiveness from its communication and thus loses a grip on the true content of the biblical message, the church increasingly exhibits a self-centeredness grounded in secular psychology, pragmatism, and an eagerness to make unbelieving "experts," in effect, the most influential church consultants.

The pursuit of social and cultural acceptance is a more subtle and insidious threat to the church's spiritual health than is theological liberalism, which is clearly defined and easier to recognize and confront.

Worldly evangelicalism pretends to adhere to the truth yet quietly undermines it. It offers a pop-style musical experience, sentimental emotion, attention to self-defined needs, and practical problem-solving techniques (often derived from market surveys) instead of scriptural answers regarding law, sin, forgiveness, and righteousness.

The contemporary church urgently needs spiritual revival, and that will occur only when believers get beyond personal desires and long to think, speak, and live in the ways Scripture outlines.

When they do, the church will be more than a crowd; it will become spiritually powerful before a hostile world.

- John MacArthur, 1 Peter 4:7-11

I agree, we need to get back to the basics!

We need to believe what God has said in His Word, all of it, and apply it to our lives.

We need to understand that suffering is a part of this life, and the bigger issue is not if we will suffer, we will, but how we are going to handle the suffering, the persecution that comes into our lives!

That is what Peter is telling us here and remember, he is speaking to Christians who have been persecuted for their faith and driven from their homes!

I have called our study this morning – ***FAITH IN SUFFERING!***

And the reason for that title is because faith deals with living, where our hope is placed upon that then is manifested in our life!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

***SERVICE IN SUFFERING – I PETER 4:7-11***

***REJOICE IN SUFFERING – I PETER 4:12-14***

***HOW NOT TO LIVE – I PETER 4:15***

***GLORY TO GOD – I PETER 4:16***

***THE COMING JUDGMENT – I PETER 4:17-19***

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Peter chapter 4, beginning in verse 7 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***FAITH IN SUFFERING!***

**I PETER 4****VERSES 7-11**

Remember that Peter is speaking to those Christians who were suffering for their faith in Christ. And he wants to admonish his readers to hang in there.

But why?

Because “**... the end of all things is at hand ...**” I Peter 4:7.

In other words, the early church was looking for the return of Christ to put down man's rebellion and to set up His Kingdom on this earth.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, “*The assertion that the end of the age does indeed stand near and may break in at any time well represents the view of the early church.*”

(Hiebert)

And I believe that he is specifically speaking of the Rapture of the Church because the Greek verb that is translated “**is at hand**” speaks of it happening or occurring at any moment, it is imminent.

That is true of the Rapture of the church, it can happen at any moment. Paul was waiting for it in his day and we too should be waiting for the sound of the trumpet and the Lord calling us home, especially when we see all that is happening in the world today!

In Luke 14:40 Jesus said, **“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”**

Also, in James 5:8 we are told, **“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”**

With that in mind, that the Lord can return at any moment, Peter admonishes them and us to **“... be serious and watchful in your prayers.”** I Peter 4:7.

Now how does that apply to us today?

It should cause us to be fervent in our prayers. We should be watchful of what is going on and pray for the situations we see happening.

We need to be praying for a steadfast endurance in the faith as persecution comes our way and to live exemplary lives in the midst of the persecution so that no matter what comes our way, we will shine forth brightly for Jesus!

Knowing that Jesus is coming back soon should motivated us to live a life pleasing to God and one that is serious in regard to our faith!

It is as Paul said in Ephesians 5:15-21, **“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

Let us be wise, let us be controlled by the Spirit of God and not our flesh! Let us pray fervently!

Now, it is out of what Peter says here in I Peter 4:7 that he launches into having fervent love for others, to be hospitable, don't grumble, use the gifts that God has given to you!

Again, keep in mind that what Peter is writing about here is linked to what he just spoke of, that the Lord's return is close, and we need to be serious and watchful in our prayers and in all that we do.

But what does that have to do with what he is speaking of in I Peter 4:8-11?

Let me ask you this.

As we get closer to the Lord's return do you think things are going to get better, society as a whole more moral, violence decreasing. Are we going to just be *tiptoeing through the tulips* you might say through life and then the Lord will come for us and after we are gone everything will get bad?

No, things are going to get worse and worse and that is why Peter tells us to be alert, pay attention, pray because things are going to get bad, and we need to be serious about our faith!

And the point here that Peter is making is this. ***“In spite of all the persecution, in spite of all the immorality, in spite of all the violence, in spite of all this evil, have fervent love for others, to be hospitable, don't grumble, use the gifts that God has given to you!”***

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

If we really look for the return of Christ, then we shall think of others and properly relate to them. Love for the saints is important, ***“above [before] all things.”***

Love is the badge of a believer in this world (John 13:34-35). Especially in times of testing and persecution, Christians need to love one another and be united in heart.

This love should be ***“fervent.”***



The word pictures an athlete straining to reach the goal. It speaks of eagerness and intensity. Christian love is something we have to work at, just the way an athlete works on his skills.

It is not a matter of emotional feeling, though that is included, but of dedicated will. Christian love means that we treat others the way God treats us, obeying His commandments in the Word.

It is even possible to love people that we do not like!

- Warren Wiersbe, the Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 919

Now here is where it gets difficult for us. When things are not going our way, when persecution or difficult times come upon us, it is hard to love others, it is hard to forgive their sins against us, it is hard to be hospitable and not complain. Not only that but when these things happen in our lives we tend to withdraw from the body and not use the gifts that God has given to us for the edifying of the body, for the betterment of the body of Christ!

But that is what we are called to do, to love and forgive, to be hospitable, to use the gifts that God has given to us!

And folks, this is done as you submit yourself to the will of God for only then will you be able to submit to others, especially during difficult times!

We tend to look out for ourselves and as we do, we hurt others, and that is not a fervent type of love. Not even close.

Now what does Peter mean when he says that “**love will cover a multitude of sins**” as he quotes out of Proverbs 10:12?

In regard to our love covering a multitude of sins, Grudem tells us: ***“Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offences, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound – to Satan’s perverse delight.”***

Let us be wise and obey the will of God for our lives and forgive others as God has freely and graciously forgiven us!

Now that is not saying we condone their sin or ignore their sin. But can we love them as Christ loves us? That puts it into perspective for us!

And look at what God has done for us so we can minister to others. He has given us His multi-faceted or manifold grace; He has given to us gifts to minister in the body of Christ.

Now, if we don’t use these gifts Peter tells us it is as if God’s grace gift was given to us in vain. And folks, if we don’t use these gifts then they are wasted.

Meyer puts it this way, ***“Manifold grace is many-coloured grace. As when a ray of light breaks into a spray of many hues, so each of us receives God’s grace at a different angle, and flashes it back broken up into some fresh colour.”***

Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 12, **“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all . . . But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”** I Corinthians 12:7, 11.

As Peter continues on here, he is admonishing us to live holy lives in spite of what comes our way, the persecution we face because as we do, God is glorified! And we will see Peter speak of that again, of our actions bringing glory to God as we get to I Peter 4:16.

And Peter ends this section with a big **“Amen!”** or ***“so let it be!”***

Don't be sidetracked by these things but keep your eyes and heart focused on the Lord and then walk accordingly.

J. C. Ryle rightly observes regarding holy living in a hostile world. He tells us: *“A holy man will follow after spiritual-mindedness. He will endeavor to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand. He will not neglect the business of the life that now is; but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. He will aim to live like one whose treasure is in heaven, and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim traveling to his home.”*

Amen to that!

But how can we look out for others when so much is happening in our own lives?

That is a great question and let me share this illustration with you and I think you will get the point.

We are told,

Parnell Bailey visited an orange grove where an irrigation pump had broken down.

The season was unusually dry and some of the trees were beginning to die from lack of water.

The man giving the tour then took Bailey to his own orchard where irrigation was used sparingly.

*“These trees could go without rain for another 2 weeks,”* he said.

*“You see, when they were young, I frequently kept water from them. This suffering caused them to send their roots deeper into the soil in search of moisture. Now mine are the deepest-rooted trees in the area. While others are being scorched by the sun, these are finding moisture at a greater depth.”*

- Our Daily Bread

In other words, sink your faith, your roots you might say, deep down into the Lord Jesus Christ for when those difficult times come, your faith will stand strong, and you will be able to reach out to others – ***SERVICE IN SUFFERING!***

As we read on, we will be looking at – ***REJOICE IN SUFFERING!***

I know, you can't wait to see what I am going to say about this!

But it is not what I have to say, what does the Holy Spirit want to teach us in regard to suffering and rejoicing!

Let's see what Peter wrote!

#### VERSES 12-14

Think about persecution today in America. We tend to look at it as strange or abnormal.

But keep in mind that the early church persecution was seen as normal. In fact, if you were not persecuted for your faith, that was odd, that was abnormal!

Now don't get me wrong, it is not that they liked it or enjoyed it, but it was just the result of loving Jesus, the world will come against you!

And the problem is that we need to have a correct perspective of things, and many times we don't!

Let me make two points here regarding persecution and how some Christians see them.

The first is the carnal Christian and he sees these things, this persecution from an earthly perspective. They feel that God is there to bless them and bless them and bless them again.

God is there to make them happy; it is all about self and if you think about it, laying up treasures on this earth.

And when bad things happen, they see it as a Satanic attack on their lives. They see Satan as trying to destroy their happiness and what do they do? They rebuke Satan so they can once again enjoy the blessings of God!

Obviously, that is wrong.

Then there is the spirit-filled Christian, he walks by faith, and he sees life through a Biblical perspective, with a Biblical lens you might say.

What does that mean?

It means denying yourself, taking up the cross and following Jesus wherever He is leading you!

And yes, Satan tries to tempt us, to move us away from God, but like that first group, that is where it ends, it is all Satan!

That is not true.

You see, God uses those things that happen in our life to test our faith, to help us grow and mature in the Lord, to get us to trust in Him more and more!

Temptations and tests are the same incident, but Satan wants to destroy, God wants to give abundant life!

Again, perspective is everything.

Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

The famous preacher D. L. Moody told about a Christian woman who was always bright, cheerful, and optimistic, even though she was confined to her room because of illness.

She lived in an attic apartment on the fifth floor of an old, rundown building.

A friend decided to visit her one day and brought along another woman - a person of great wealth.

Since there was no elevator, the two ladies began the long climb upward. When they reached the second floor, the well-to-do woman commented, ***“What a dark and filthy place!”***

Her friend replied, ***“It’s better higher up.”***

When they arrived at the third landing, the remark was made, ***“Things look even worse here.”***

Again the reply, ***“It’s better higher up.”***

The two women finally reached the attic level, where they found the bedridden saint of God.

A smile on her face radiated the joy that filled her heart.

Although the room was clean and flowers were on the windowsill, the wealthy visitor could not get over the stark surroundings in which this woman lived.

She blurted out, ***“It must be very difficult for you to be here like this!”***

Without a moment’s hesitation the shut-in responded, ***“It’s better higher up.”***

She was not looking at temporal things. With the eye of faith fixed on the eternal, she had found the secret of true satisfaction and contentment.

- Our Daily Bread

How true that is – ***IT IS GOING TO BE BETTER HIGHER UP – WHEN WE ARE RAPTURED TO MEET OUR LORD AND SAVIOR IN THE AIR!***

We see here that Peter is speaking of the cross and remember at one time that Peter was rebuked by Jesus for telling Jesus that He would not have to suffer on the cross and be put to death! Peter was thinking Kingdom Age and the Lord had work to do before the Kingdom was established, He had to pay the price for our sins on the cross of Calvary!

In fact, in Mark 8:31-33 we are told of this incident, **“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’”**

But now Peter has matured, he is empowered by the Spirit of God, and he sees things differently.

In fact, he tells us that it is a strange thing if you think you are not going to be persecuted for your faith!

Keep in mind that Nero’s persecution against Christians was growing and he was burning Christians alive at the stake and Peter is warning them not to be surprised because what is happening in Rome is spreading throughout the Roman Empire!

Thus, instead of sorrow, rejoice in these things knowing that you are suffering for your faith just as the Lord did.

Now that is hard. How do we do that?

Paul tells us in Hebrews 12:2-4, **“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”**

What was the joy that was set before Jesus?

That joy was knowing that He was going to be received back to glory with the Father, but first came death!

That joy was knowing that the work that He came to do was finished. He came save mankind from their sins and that broken fellowship with God will be restored!

Thus, our joy in the midst of these fiery trials is to be identified with our Lord and to understand we will be raised in glory one day to be with Him!

But again, we see suffering as strange and yet, like I have said, the early church understood that suffering was part of a life with Christ!

In fact, the words *“suffer”*, *“suffered”* and *“suffering”* are used a total of twenty-one times in this Epistle.

Remember what Jesus said in John 15:18-19, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”**

So don't think it strange or abnormal to be persecuted for your faith in Christ!



Paul, in Romans 8:18, gives us this perspective of things as he tells us, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”**

When you compare all we are going through in this life with eternity, it doesn't compare. Nothing compares with eternity with the Lord and that again is a good perspective to have, a Biblical perspective to have!

And in Philippians 3:9-10 we are told, **“and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”**

Now when many read this, they love the power and they stop there, but Paul tells us that it is not only **“the power of His resurrection”**, but also **“the fellowship of His sufferings.”**

Why is this important for us?

Because the more you go through tough times, the more you face persecution, the more you will seek His Kingdom and His righteousness to come!

Your eyes will be focused upward and not on the things of this world!

And, as Peter said in I Peter 4:7, **“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”**

In other words, ***“It is going to get tough, persecution will grow, but don't lose hope, the Lord is coming back and thus, rejoice in all that you are going through and let your light so shine that it glorifies the Father in heaven!”***

Yes – ***REJOICE IN SUFFERING!***

But we can miss the point and complain or act in such a way that we bring tough times upon ourselves and thus, the next point – ***HOW NOT TO LIVE!***

### VERSE 15

Think about it like this.

As Christians we are going to suffer persecution. But what Peter is showing us is that there are basically two types of persecution.

We can suffer for righteousness sake, which is what should happen!

Or we can suffer for unrighteousness sake, and that is what we are not to do!

And here Peter is speaking of being persecuted for your faith in Christ but not because you are being obnoxious or weird!

And if you do suffer for being evil, for doing wrong, there is no glory for God in that.

Look at this list that Peter wrote down. He speaks of murderers, thieves, an evildoer and hopefully you are all thinking, ***“I have not done any of those things!”***

Evildoer may be a tough one because it encompasses all kinds of things. And stealing something, another tough one. Murder may be a little easier because most if not all of us have not murdered any one!

But is that really true?

Have you murdered anyone with your words, or maybe in your heart?

That is a big one.

But if you are still thinking you are doing good, look at what else Peter lists here –

### ***BEING A BUSYBODY!***

What does that mean?

It means that you are sticking your nose in other people's business!

I think the idea here is that Peter is telling us that we are not to go back to that which Christ set you free from!

In I Thessalonians 4:11-12 we are told, **“that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.”**

I like the way that one pastor summed it up. He wrote,

“Christians are never to be troublemakers or agitators in society or in their places of work (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1–3; Titus 3:1–5).

They may confront the sins in the lives of other believers, help administer church discipline, challenge unbelievers with the gospel, and exhort fellow saints to greater levels of godliness; but regarding others' private matters that do not concern them, believers should never intrude inappropriately.

More specifically, Peter was referring to political activism and civil agitation - disruptive or illegal activity that interferes with the smooth functioning of society and government.

Such activity would compel the authorities to mete out punishment (Rom. 13:2–4)

It is wrong for believers to view that punishment as persecution for their faith. If they step outside the faith and bring trouble, hostility, resentment, or persecution on themselves, they have no more right to expect Holy Spirit relief than if they were murderers.”

He went on to say,

“I remember a conversation I once had with a Russian pastor who had suffered greatly under Soviet communism. I asked if he or his fellow Christians ever rebelled against that form of government. He replied that it was all their convictions that if they were ever resented and persecuted by the secular authorities, it would be for the gospel only. The Russian church actually grew strong in that environment...”

Isn't that what Peter wrote in I Peter 3:13-17, **“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”**

We are to live lives that would give – ***GLORY TO GOD!***

That is our next point!

#### VERSE 16

Let me start by saying this. We don't glorify God *for* suffering. But we do glorify Him *in* suffering, and we glorify Him for what He will accomplish in us and through us with the suffering.

And notice what Peter is saying here. If you suffer as a believer, you glorify God.

But if you're ridiculed for evil, or you're sticking your nose in other people's business - then you've caused shame, as we have seen.

I also want you to see here that Peter uses the word **“Christian”** here.

What is interesting to me is that this word was not a word of praise, but it was originally a derogatory term used by the enemies of Christ to denote His followers. They would call them “*Christ-anians*” or “*Christ followers.*” Today we might say Jesus-people!

What happened was that believers liked that so much that they began to call themselves Christians.

What is interesting is that the word “**Christian**” is only found in three places in the New Testament.

We see it spoken of here in I Peter 4:16.

Then in Acts 11:26 we see that they were first called Christians in Antioch.

And in Acts 26:28 we see King Agrippa use this word for those who were followers of Christ, saying that Paul almost convinced him of becoming a Christian or one who follows Christ. That is what the word means.

You see, we not only follow His teachings, but we identify with Him, even in His sufferings!

By the time Peter wrote this letter, in the early 60’s, around 63 or early 64 A. D., they were using this term Christians to identify themselves with Christ and the reason for this suffering that they were enduring was because they had identified themselves with Christ!

Again, perspective is important. And here Peter is telling us that as we suffer for Christ, as we live out our lives during these difficult times, we are glorifying God!

Remember that the next time you are suffering or going through some kind of persecution.

Now I once again understand that there are some who think suffering is not part of the Christian life, and they are surprised when it comes upon them.

Through your suffering, as you share in the sufferings of Christ, God is indeed being glorified, and you are being blessed.

Again, this is not a truth we always feel, but we hold onto it in faith. We should not be surprised when we suffer.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Josef Tson, who faced much evil in communist Romania, told me, ***“This world, with all its evil, is God’s deliberately chosen environment for people to grow in their characters. The character and trustworthiness we form here, we take with us there, to Heaven. Romans and 1 Peter 4:19 make clear that suffering is a grace from God. It is a grace given us now to prepare us for living forever.”***

Mountain climbers could save time and energy if they reached the summit in a helicopter, but their ultimate purpose is conquest, not efficiency. Sure, they want to reach a goal, but they want to do so the hard way by testing their character and resolve.

God could create scientists, mathematicians, athletes, and musicians. He doesn’t. He creates children who take on those roles over a long process. We learn to excel by handling failure. Only in cultivating discipline, endurance, and patience do we find satisfaction and reward.

- <https://bit.ly/3O4z1lp>

I hope you have seen that suffering and persecution is a part of our lives and without it, we will not make beautiful music.

What do I mean by that?

Let me share this with you and you will see.

A little piece of wood once complained bitterly because its owner kept whittling away at it, cutting and filling it with holes, but the one who was cutting it so remorselessly paid no attention to it complaining.

He was making a flute out of that piece of ebony, and he was too wise to resist from doing so, even though the wood complained bitterly.

He seemed to say, *“Little piece of wood, without these holes, and all this cutting, you would be a black stick forever, just a useless piece of ebony. What I am doing now may make you think that I am destroying you, but, instead, I will change you into a flute, and your sweet music will charm the souls of men and comfort many a sorrowing heart. My cutting you is the making of you for only thus can you be a blessing in the world.”*

- M. R. Dehaan, Broken Things

And not only a blessing to the world as we live out our faith, but in the things that we do we are bringing glory to God!

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

We are to shine for Jesus and shine brightly for Him. When people see our lives, they should be seen as a lighthouse to warn people of the danger ahead of them and direct them to safety, which is only found in Jesus!

Now the problem comes when we are not shining because we are hiding our light and if we are doing that guess what we are blending into?

We are blending into the darkness!

Place your light, your life in Christ in such a way that people can see it.

There is another problem, our light may be dim, it may be going out.

What can we do?

I like what one writer said,

A man returning from a journey brought his wife a matchbox that would glow in the dark.

After he gave it to her, she turned out the light, but it could not be seen.

Both thought they had been cheated.

Then the wife noticed some French words on the box and asked a friend to translate them.

The inscription said: ***“If you want me to shine in the night, keep me in the light.”***

So it is with us! We must expose ourselves to Jesus, delight in his Word, and spend time in prayer soaking up his rays. As Paul says:

***And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)***

If you want to shine in the night, keep your eyes on the light.

- R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 85-86

You see, our Christian influence should bring – ***GLORY TO GOD!***

That is what happens as we are salt and light in this world, God receives the glory, not us!

May we never forget that!

The last point we will be looking at this morning is – ***THE COMING JUDGMENT!***



VERSES 17-19

Yes, God will use judgment, persecution to purify us, to make us more like Him. But please understand that this is done with the idea of building up, it is done in a positive way even though the situation may be difficult.

Now as Peter compares the judgment of the godly with the ungodly, they don't compare, it is like apples and oranges.

Thus, it is far better to suffer now, enduring through these tough times with joy because God is working in us to bring us to glory.

But for the ungodly, it doesn't even compare, the judgment for them is eternal, it will never end.

There is the coming Tribulation Period that lasts for seven years, but that is nothing compared to the Lake of Fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth for eternity as the ungodly are separated from God.

Thus, there is darkness and cold!

It is as Proverbs 11:31 tells us, **“If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, How much more the ungodly and the sinner.”**

Also, Paul in Hebrews 12:27-29 tells us, **“Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”**

Fire can purify as it does with gold, and that is what God is doing in our lives.

Fire can also destroy and for the unsaved, their righteousness will be burned up for it is like filthy rags before a holy and righteous God, it will not be able to stand His judgment!

And Paul tells us that God is going to shake everything that can be shaken and only that which is of Him will stand!

As I close this morning Peter tells us to commit our souls to Jesus.

The word “**commit**” is a word that was used for leaving money on deposit with a trusted friend.

In other words, that friend was duty bound to return the money intact. Thus, when we commit our souls to Jesus, we can rest assured it is safe, you can take that to the bank you might say! It is that safe!

Remember the All-State commercials, “*You’re in good hands with All-State*”?

Well, I have one that is more secure, “*You’re in better hands with Jesus!*”

Why?

Because He is faithful.

You see, He is not only our faithful Creator who has molded and shaped us from the dust of the earth, but He is also the Creator and Sustainer of our salvation!

It is as Peter said in I Peter 1:3-5, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**”

God has saved us by His power, and He will keep us and there is a place reserved in Heaven for us.

Thus, as persecution comes, know He is in control and He will allow us to go through these times for our best, to bring us to glory one day!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

A man found a cocoon of the emperor moth and took it home to watch it emerge.

One day a small opening appeared, and for several hours the moth struggled but couldn't seem to force its body past a certain point.

Deciding something was wrong, the man took scissors and snipped the remaining bit of cocoon.

The moth emerged easily, its body large and swollen, the wings small and shriveled.

He expected that in a few hours the wings would spread out in their natural beauty, but they did not.

Instead of developing into a creature free to fly, the moth spent its life dragging around a swollen body and shriveled wings.

The constricting cocoon and the struggle necessary to pass through the tiny opening are God's way of forcing fluid from the body into the wings.

The "merciful" snip was, in reality, cruel.

Sometimes the struggle is exactly what we need.

- Beth Landers

As much as we might not like it, this is what is needed in our lives to help us to fly in our faith!

And a big "*AMEN!*" to that!