

TEXTUAL ISSUES 1 PETER 4:12-19

1 Peter 4:12-19. *Suffering is a curse or a blessing—it all depends on the reason for your suffering.* Family: please don't be surprised when the trials you face are painful. Suffering is not a strange phenomenon for believers in the Christ.

So? Rejoice. Yes, rejoice because as you share in the sufferings of the Christ, you can be jubilant when His glory is revealed to everyone. If you are insulted [ὀνειδίζεσθε, 3679; up-braided, reviled, reproached],⁷ because of you are carrying Christ's name, His authority within you, then you are blessed; i.e., the Lord God is closer to you. Holy Spirit is glorified then; He sits down next to you on your porch swing.⁸

Now if you do suffer, make sure it's not because you've stolen or killed, or committed any crime, or even meddling [ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος, 244, ahl-low-trie-pis-ko-pos; i.e., an evildoer, busybody].

If you do suffer, however, because you follow, obey, and worship the Christ, do not be ashamed. In fact, praise the Lord God that people know you by His authority, His name, by your allegiance to Him. Judgment will begin with the family of God. If it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who reject the good news from the Lord God? Remember the wise one who said—*It's tough enough for the righteous to be redeemed. What will happen to the ungoldly and those separated from God?*

So what? When you suffer⁹ to achieve God's purpose, commit yourself to the Creator who is faithful in all things—continue to do good, regardless of the “cost” of suffering.

Q Why shouldn't we be surprised at suffering (pahs-kon-tes, see note 9), feeling deeply?

1 PETER 4:12-19

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶If you suffer as a Christian, however, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And,

If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? [Proverbs 11:21]

¹⁹So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

⁷This reproach can be justified; cf., Matthew 11:20—*Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.*

Or, the reproach/denunciation can be without foundation; cf., Matthew 5:11&12—*Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

⁸The operative verb is ἀναπαύεται, 373, ana-paw-eh-tay; “to take His ease with...”

⁹The Greek is πάσχοντες, 3958, pahs-kon-tes; root is one of deep feeling, heavy emotion, not inherently positive or negative.

- Q What is “strange” about feeling deeply for believing and acting as followers of Jesus the Christ?
- Q How does one “rejoice” when suffering for the cause of Christ? What are your suffering “limits?” That is, what will put your feet on the broad path?
- Q What is the biggest insult you’ve received for being a follower of the Christ? Why did you find it “insulting?” [see footnote 7 about the word Peter uses here].
- Q What is the reward (verse 14) for suffering, feeling deeply, for the Christ?
- Q Why did Peter equate murder, theft, criminal activity with “meddling?”
- Q What praise would be extended to the Lord God for suffering for His name, for being His representative, i.e., speaking and behaving in His name? A song? A prayer? A poem? A gift? How would this praise be manifested for an opportunity for the Lord God to come and “rest with you?”
- Q What kind of shame can come from following the Christ as Lord?
- Q Why does the judgment begin with “the family of God?” So what?
- Q Regardless then of suffering for His purpose—feeling deeply—to what are we to be committed? How would that be manifested?



4:1 *Therefore.* Since 3:19-22 is probably parenthetical, 4:1 could be viewed as tying back to 3:18. The aspect of Christ's suffering that these passages stress is suffering unjustly because one has done good. Furthermore, it is physical suffering—"in his body."

- *arm yourselves also with the same attitude.* Believers are to be prepared also to suffer unjustly, and to face such abuse with Christ's attitude—with his willingness to suffer for doing good. (For a similar principal principle in Paul's writings see Philippians 2:5-11.)
- *because . . . is done with sin.* Such suffering enables one to straighten out his priorities. Sinful desires and practices that once seemed important now seem insignificant when one's life is in jeopardy. Serious suffering for Christ advances the progress of *sanctification*. (Consider Ro 6:1-14 as a parallel idea, but Peter is not referring to being dead to sin in Paul's sense.)

4:2 *for evil human desires . . . for the will of God.* Now that Christ's attitude prevails, God's will becomes the determining factor in life; i.e., one's *raison d'être*.

4:3 *pagans.* Lit. "the Gentiles." Along with the term "idolatry," this suggests that at least some of the readers were Gentiles who had repented from a pagan life-style.

4:4 *They think it strange . . . and they heap abuse on you.* One of the reasons for the suffering the readers were undergoing.

4:5 *have to give account.* See Ac 17:31; Ro 2:5,16.

- *him who is ready to judge.* In the NT both the Father and the Son are said to be judge on the great, final judgment day. The Father is the ultimate source of judgment, but He delegates judgment to the Son (cf. Jn 5:27; Ac 17:31).
- *the living and the dead.* Those alive and those dead when the final judgment day dawns.

4:6 *For this is the reason.* The reason referred to is expressed in the latter part of the verse (in the "so that" clause), not in the preceding verse.

- *was preached even to those who are now dead.* This preaching was a past event. The word "now" does not occur in the Greek, but it is necessary to make it clear that the preaching was done not after these people had died, but while they were still alive. (There will be no opportunity for people to be saved after death; see Hebrews 9:27.)
- *that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body.* The first reason that the gospel was preached to those now dead. Some say that this judgment is that to which all people must submit, either in this life (see Jn 5:24) or in the life to come (see v. 5). The gospel is preached to people in this life so that in Christ's death they may receive judgment now and avoid judgment to come. Others hold that these people are judged according to human standards by the pagan world, which does not understand why God's people no longer follow its sinful way of life (see vv. 2-4). So also the world misunderstood the Christ (see Acts 2:22-24,36; 3:13-15; 5:30-32; 7:51-53).
- *but live according to God in regard to the spirit.* The second reason that the gospel was preached to those now dead. Some believe this means that all gospel preaching has as its goal that the hearers may live as God lives—eternally—and that this life is given by the Holy Spirit. Others maintain that it means that the ultimate reason for the preaching of the gospel is that God's people, even though the wicked world may abuse them and put them to death, will have eternal life, which Holy Spirit imparts.

4:7 *Therefore.* Anticipating the end times, particularly Christ's return, should influence believers' attitudes, actions and relationships (see 2Pe 3:11-14).

- *clear minded.* Christians are to be characterized by reason; are to make wise, mature decisions; and are to have a clearly defined, decisive purpose in life.
- *self-controlled.* See Gal 5:23.

- *pray*. Cf. 3:7; Lk 18:1; 1Co 7:5; Eph 6:18; 1Th 5:17; 1Jn 5:14-15.

4:8 *love each other deeply*. See 1Th 4:9-10; 2Pe 1:7; 1Jn 4:7-11.

- *love covers over . . . sins*. Some argue this means love forgives again and again (see Mt 18:21-22; 1Co 13:5; Eph 4:32). Others take the passage literally; i.e., loving others [ἀγάπη καλύπτει, 2572; hides, conceals, veils] hides our sins.

4:9 *Offer hospitality*. See Ro 12:13; 1Ti 3:2; 5:10; Tit 1:8; 3Jn 5-8.

4:10 *use whatever gift he has received*. See Ro 12:4-8; 1Co 12:7-11.

4:11 *very words*. The Greek for this phrase is used to refer to the Scriptures or to words [a la λογία, logos] God has spoken (see Ac 7:38; Ro 3:2). *To him be the glory*. See 1Co 1:26-31; Jude 24-25.

4:12 *Dear friends*. Or "Beloved..." (see 2:11). *do not be surprised at the painful trial*. See 1:6-7; 2:20-21.

4:13 *rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ*. Remember, Peter once rebelled against the idea that Christ would suffer (see Matthew 16:21-23), and he received the ultimate put down from Jesus the Christ.

4:14 *insulted because of the name of Christ*. See Mt 5:11-12; Jn 15:18-20; Ac 5:41; 14:22; Ro 8:17; 2Co 1:5; Php 3:10; 2Ti 3:12.

4:17 *judgment to begin with the family of God*. The persecutions that believers were undergoing were divinely sent judgment intended to purify God's people.

- *the outcome . . . for those who do not obey the gospel*. If God brings judgment on his own people, how much more serious will the judgment be that he will bring on unbelievers!