

# Sharing the Sufferings of Christ

## I Peter 4:12-19

### INTRODUCTION:

If you would open your Bibles this morning, in a few minutes, we will be reading from I Peter Chapter 4 verses 12-19.

In this book of I Peter, Peter has told us many things concerning our Christian life. He was writing to Christian Jews who had been scattered due to persecution. They had been separated from their homes and possessions and were now living as aliens among people who did not like them. He knew that they were discouraged and needed reminding of what Christ had done for them on the cross and what their purpose was on this earth.

The message in summary is this: **LIFE IS SHORT...DEATH IS CERTAIN...ETERNITY IS FOREVER...REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE END.**

**LIFE IS SHORT.** Don't think of this life on earth as your permanent home. This is just a temporary dwelling place where we are given the opportunity to get our lives back in tune with God. **That is the purpose of our life!**

### ILLUSTRATION:

Your life is like a cold morning in winter when you walk outside and take a deep breath of the cold air and exhale. A little white cloud of vapor appears and almost immediately fades away.

We are all sinners and sin separates us from God and we can do nothing on our own to be sinless before God. The scriptures tell us that our only hope of restoring our relationship with God is through His Son, Jesus Christ. We must surrender our lives to God and seek purity in our lives. We must prepare ourselves to face God in judgment.

**DEATH IS CERTAIN.** We are living in a world that is bound by time and our life here is not eternal. We **WILL ALL** die! When we die our window of opportunity to get right with God is gone forever. There is no second chance!

**ETERNITY IS FOREVER.** Life seems like a very long time. It is so hard for us to look beyond this lifetime and anticipate what is to come. But anticipate we must! The time we live on earth is as a vapor that immediately fades away when compared to eternity.

Eternity is time without end. How we spend our short life on earth will dictate how we will spend eternity. Either in the presence of God or in an eternal life of torment with Satan and his fallen angels.

**REMAIN FAITHFUL TO HIM.** However long or short your life may be, you must continuously remain faithful to Him.

WHY? Because tomorrow may never come for you. We must be prepared for Christ's return and remain faithful to Him to the end.

We find ourselves eagerly willing to accept Christ as our Lord and Savior and cheerfully accepting the remission of sin that He has promised to us. But we often are **painfully slow** in truly **surrendering** ourselves over to Him and forsaking worldly things. How slow we are to finally realize that God's way IS the right way and begin to experience His glory in us and the JOY and HOPE that comes by being faithful to Him and doing His will.

**Life is Short...Death is Certain...Eternity is Forever...Remain Faithful to the End.**

This begs the question "How can I live my life in order to be considered Faithful to the End?".

With this in mind, Peter now gives us practical ways to live this "new life" in Christ in order to be prepared for Christ's return.

## All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 4:12-19 (NASB)

<sup>12</sup> 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; <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; <sup>16</sup> but if *anyone* suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. <sup>17</sup> For *it* is time for judgment to begin 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? <sup>18</sup> AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? <sup>19</sup> Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

As we prepare to look more closely at Peter's passage this morning, let's bow in a word of prayer.

## Prayer

Peter lays out for us three ways that we can Share in the Sufferings of Christ and remain faithful to the end.

1. Experiencing Joy in Suffering.
2. Glorifying God in Your Life.
3. Trusting in God.

## BODY:

### **I. Experiencing Joy in Suffering.**

## 1 Peter 4:12-13 (NASB)

<sup>12</sup> 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; <sup>13</sup> 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.

So many preachers today proclaim the false view that God guarantees us health, wealth and a carefree lifestyle.

The belief that our inheritance is in this life distorts the scriptures, therefore, it is impossible to understand the higher purposes of God without first correcting the misunderstandings many are taught to believe.

If we are taught that we are guaranteed a healthy, prosperous life in tranquility, then suffering can only mean failure of our own spiritual lives or frustration against God for failing to meet our expectations.

Many teach that suffering is the result of sin, a lack of faith, or the anger of God. If this were true, each time we suffer we would have to ask, "Why me?" or, "What have I done?" What Christian can thrive and spiritually mature under the constant fear of falling out of favor with God? How many Christians lose their faith because they think that God has deserted them and allowed something bad to happen in their life such as a death of a loved one, a terminal illness, or financial ruin?

Human nature longs for comfort and peace. We, by nature, will avoid suffering at any cost. I don't want to suffer and I don't know anyone who does want to suffer. However, suffering is a part of life. We live in a fallen world and we dwell in a world that is at war with God. Both spiritually and physically, creation is not as it was created to be. One day God will restore all things, but the road to eternity passes by many hardships. The travesty is that the church does not equip believers to expect suffering.

The hard lesson to learn is that the world's way is not God's way.

The irony of it all is that the peace that we seek can only be found through the very thing that we naturally want to avoid.

I wonder if any of you have ever read the Gospels and Acts and think, "Wouldn't it be great to have lived during the time of the apostles?"

We could watch them perform miracles and hear the gospel straight from their mouth and ask questions. We could see and experience firsthand the amazing growth of the early church. Wouldn't it have been exciting to have been there in the book of Acts?

And then we remember that of the twelve apostles, 11 of them were murdered for their faith. The apostle John, who was not killed, was exiled to the Isle of Patmos at the end of his lifetime. The apostle Paul told us what his life was like...

## 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 (NASB)

<sup>23</sup> Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. <sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. <sup>26</sup> *I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;* <sup>27</sup> *I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*

If these men did not understand suffering, then they would have given up and could never have endured to the end. Even the apostle Paul stated that if there was no eternal hope, they should eat and drink to live it up until the time to die. Instead of men of sorrow, defeated in this life, we see the apostles rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name.

Did Jesus find joy in the cross? Did the apostles find joy in suffering? Did the prophets find joy in the shame they were forced to endure? No. The joy each of these found was experienced because of their suffering.

It was for the joy that was set before Him that Jesus endured the cross. Jesus' earthly mission was to endure the cross, but He also saw beyond the cross. He saw our redemption and the glory that we will one day share with Him. The apostles did not enjoy their beatings and persecutions; they rejoiced because they were looking ahead to the promise that they will one day receive.

I would like to start a truism or saying and have you finish it.

GOOD THINGS COME.....(TO THOSE WHO WAIT).

That does not describe our culture today does it? We are not waiters. We want everything RIGHT NOW! We all just want to be happy and we want to be happy NOW.

Let me tell you, if you do not live for God, worldly happiness ultimately has no value. If you can embrace trouble in your life for Christ's sake, you take on the glory of God and His glory will shine through you to others.

But we are impatient, we are immature, and we fail to count the cost. These are fatal characteristics.

The same principles are not only true in spiritual things, but also in financial things.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

If a slice of pizza sells for \$2 and you buy a slice every week for 50 years, you will spend \$5,200 on pizza. If you were to give up this piece of pizza and invest the money instead earning 8% interest compounded daily for 50 years you would save almost \$65,000.

**I am never eating pizza again! (Wait for giggles)**

Investing, saving, denying ourselves, waiting just a little bit has a massive effect later. We can see this in our own world of finances.

Can you imagine how exponentially greater it is in the eternal realm?

This is **SO** hard for us. **WHY? BECAUSE WE LIKE PIZZA!** And we want it now. And we are not willing to tell ourselves "**NO!**".

If we are willing to patiently trade moments of comfort for temporary suffering and build a heavenly treasure our reward will be great! If we have suffered for Christ during our lifetime here we will be glorified together with Christ when He returns!

## **II. GLORYIFYING GOD IN YOUR LIFE.**

1 Peter 4:14-16 (NASB)

<sup>14</sup>If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup>Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; <sup>16</sup>but if *anyone* suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

When we tell of God's work in our lives, how He saved us from sin, and the marvelous works He does in our hearts and minds every day, we glorify Him before others.

To "glorify" God means to acknowledge His greatness and give Him honor by praising and worshipping Him, primarily because He, and He alone, deserves to be praised, honored and worshipped.

Defining the glory of God in its truest sense is impossible.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

Glory is hard to define because it is more like the word beauty than the word basketball. If somebody says they have never heard of a basketball and they want you to describe it to them, it would not be hard for you to do. You would use your hands and you would say, "Well, it is like a round thing made out of leather or rubber and about 10 inches in diameter and you pump air into it until it bounces well. And then you can bounce it like this and you can throw it to people and you can run while you are bouncing it. And then there is this hoop at the end that originally was a basket. The goal is to try to throw the ball through the hoop and that is why it is called a basketball."

And they would have a really good idea. They would be able to spot one, tell it from a soccer ball or a football.

You can't do that with the word beauty. There are some words in our vocabulary which we can communicate with not because we can say them, but because we see them. We can point. And if we point at enough things and see enough things together and say: That's it, that's it, that's it. We might be able to have a common sense of beauty. But you try to put the word beauty into words, it would be very, very difficult.

Psalm 19:1 (NASB)

19 The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

God is shouting at us. He shouts with clouds. He shouts with blue expanse. He shouts with beautiful sunsets. He shouts with galaxies and stars. He is shouting, "I am glorious. Open your eyes. It is like this only better if you know me".

Glory is the fullness of God, and that is a subject too high for our finite minds. Yet, we do know in part.

When God gives His glory, He gives Himself. He cannot parcel Himself out in pieces - no man receives a portion, but all. The one who receives His love also gets His mercy, His holiness, and His strength. The one who receives His mercy also gets His love and all else that is the fullness of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NASB)

<sup>31</sup> Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Believers are called to give glory to God by what we say and do.

The question that comes to mind is if God has all the glory, which He does, how then do we "give Him" glory? How can we give God something which is His in the first place?

It does not mean that we are adding to the glory God already has. It means we are revealing the glory of God to the world through our words, lifestyle, and behavior. It also means that we are giving God our praise and adoration.

What do others think when they look at your life? Are they likely to give God glory for what they see?

### III. TRUSTING IN GOD.

1 Peter 4:17-19 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> For *it is* time for judgment to begin 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? <sup>18</sup> AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? <sup>19</sup> Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Are you willing to trust God?

**The world's ways are not God's ways!**

It seems normal for us to live our life for ourselves. To eat, drink, and be merry. To party to the fullest and do whatever feels good. Avoid suffering and get even when someone wrongs you.

But God tells us that when we live that way we are living in sin. This life on earth is temporary. When you die, you will face God in judgment. Because He is a righteous

judge, you will be tried based upon your life here on earth. Your eternity depends on your trust in God during this lifetime.

When God allows suffering in your life, He has a purpose for it. Just as Jesus' death on the cross had a purpose and the scourging of the Apostles had a purpose. They did not enjoy the suffering, but they did it because they understood that God had a purpose for it.

If there is one point I could drive home, it is this:, don't bypass the plan of God for a moment of peace.

1 Peter 3:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> 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.

Our troubles are for only a moment. His peace and His promises are forever.

## **CONCLUSION:**

**We are not guaranteed a tomorrow.** When you die, your window of opportunity to accept Christ in your life and to serve Him by remaining faithful is gone forever.

How slow we are to finally realize that God's way IS the right way and begin to experience the JOY and HOPE that comes by being faithful to Him and doing His will.

Romans 12:2 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

If you are not living your life for Christ; if you cannot see a difference between the way you live the rest of the week from the way you lived before you accepted Christ into your life; then your eternity is in jeopardy.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

## **God Be with You till We Meet Again**

God be with you till we meet again, By His counsels guide uphold you,  
With His sheep securely fold you, God be with you till we meet again.  
Till we meet...Till we meet, Till we meet at Jesus' feet;  
Till we meet...Till we meet, God be with you till we meet again.