

Book	1-Peter
Study	Study 13
Topic	Responding to Suffering in a Godly Way
Reference	1 Peter 3:13-22
Date	24 July 2019
Speaker	Pastor Leon Lim

There are four things that we will talk about in terms of it.

1. To Live in the Will of God we must be **Resolved** that we will Suffer (v1-4)
2. We are **Accountable** to God and the Gospel that has been presented to us (v5-6)
3. Christian's Should **Arm Themselves** with Seriousness and Discipline (v7-11)
4. We Should not be **Surprised** that we Suffer (v12)

We will start with verse 4

4 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.

What is the attitude basically we've got to talk about?

In today's context when we are looking and we are striving, let's say to join a religion or to do something in your work and all those kind of things, most of us in our life, at the end of your life, what do you want to achieve. We all want to be satisfied and relaxed with our achievements. You work hard so that at the end of your journey you will reach a beautiful place. So if we to strive we work very hard in our jobs today, we do everything we can to earn the best that we can or give our children the best education they have, so that the end of their journey is comfortable. Blissful, no suffering and that's because the world's idea and the world's motto is, "you only live once in this life". What you should do about it? You must enjoy life.

But Peter is saying that the Christians motto for life is totally different from this. It is this, God gave me a life, I live it like Christ for him, and when I say I live it like Christ for him, it includes suffering because Christ also suffered. So therefore as Christ suffered, I also must expect to suffer. Not expect that because I become a Christian, this is my life. Let me qualify a bit and try to explain to you, what I mean to have the resolve and intention to suffer.

Christians say since Christ suffered; it is a blessing to suffer like Christ did while we have life here on earth! That's what the early church was always saying. They were saying, to die is gain and to live is Christ. That's how Christian lived in that time. Now the Christians are totally different. Why is there this shift in the understanding of suffering? I think because we do not understand suffering the way we have to, we think suffering is a bad thing. In fact, Peter is trying to say, suffering is a good thing that we must experience in order to be like Christ. In fact, if you will read, in Hebrew it says, Christ was perfected through suffering.

Peter calls for believer to **ARM THEMSELVES** (*hoplisasthe*) with the **resolve/intention** that they will suffer. When I am talking about this, it says in the verse, arm yourselves with the

attitude of Christ. When Christ came to be our savior, he was resolved, and he knew already he was going to face the cross. So if he knew it, he had to intentionally be resolved to say, yes I will suffer because I know it is the right thing to do and in the same way we are supposed to put the same attitude, and most Christians unfortunately believe that when you start believing in Christ you become like Captain America.

I think that's the wrong understanding of Christian. The focus of being a soldier of Christ is not the fact right that we are powerful, but our God is powerful. So the armor of Christ is like, you don't see the person inside but the outside armor looks super impressive. The armor of God is actually Christ himself.

- Christ is our righteousness
- Christ is our truth
- Christ is our salvation
- Christ is the word

Armor of God is actually arming yourself with Christ, the same attitude of Christ. That's what Peter is talking about. So a Christian soldier is supposed to look like the one who is covered with this. On the outside when people see us, they see the full armor of Christ, which is Christ himself, they don't see us. They don't see this wimpy soldier behind like us. I mean we can mature and grow as a soldier. But the problem with Christians is that, they don't realize is that, Peter is saying where is the suffering of Christ. Christ is the one that has suffered for one. So he is not saying that, you literally have to go and... You know there were times during the early church years where the monks and the nuns would hit themselves, whip themselves to suffer like Christ. I am not saying that is correctly actually, I think that is not even biblical in any way, but I am trying to say that when we follow Christ, we must realize first there was someone who suffered for us and if he suffered for us we must expect and we must be resolved as we join the faith, as we mature we are also going to have to put on the suffering.

That means, maybe it will call for us to suffer like Christ for someone else, and this is the part of the gospel that most people won't like to hear. So a soldier forsakes the life of a civilian in order to serve, Christians give up their old life to do the Will of God. So if it is the will of God for us to be, for example, a policeman. If you go in, do you think we will suffer as a policeman. Sometimes in Malaysia for a Christian policeman, they say it is very hard to push away bribes. They cannot go up to a certain rank because they are not of a certain race or religion. We all have to suffer but for the sake of knowing that God called them into being a police, they are willing to do it.

A Christian no longer desire things of their own will but God's will. It is nice if you desire God's will, but when God asked me to be a pastor, I didn't really one. When I was 12 years old, I was called and He said, Son I want you to suffer. I said, no way, you must be joking, and I didn't know that it would mean serving in ministry and I saw my parents suffer when we were younger, we were so poor. We really-really suffered quite a bit and I was like, "ah, God I don't want this to happen anymore". I don't believe in this. I believe that if you would bless my family, I want to be a doctor, I want to be able to earn enough and then I will do medical missions and I will do all these kind of things, so that I can give my parents a good life and then we can do ministry and serve God how we want. That sounds more like how we see suffering today, but after this I have been serving in fulltime ministry for now 17 years and for 17 years now that I look back and all the things that I have suffered, it is so good. It is a different thing.

I no longer desire now to be a doctor to live like having spa and all those kinds of things. I am not like a monk or those kinds of things, like suffering, oh let's bring it on, that kind of thing. No, I am not talking about that kind of things, but I really now have learned to desire that I know that if God wants me to do this thing, when I suffer through it. Remember, we talk about earlier, when he purifies us, he purifies us and make us like gold. Anything that is burnt suffers.

Anything of ours that have to be purified away, it doesn't come out easily. We want our children to learn the right thing, a lot of times they have to suffer. Washing the dishes is also suffering. We have to do certain things in life, but if it is God's will slowly we no longer desire our own will but God's will. Lee Chong Wei is one example of someone who suffered for our nation. Now some of us don't think so, wait till you train like him, wait till you don't eat the way he eats and how he is so controlled about it and think about it. I remember during the last Olympics and I was watching it and Lee was trying to win that and then he couldn't and he cried. It broke my heart. Of course, he desired to win it for himself, but he desired to win it more for us. Our will became his will and he loved us so much that he wanted to win it for his history and his first apology was "sorry, I failed you again". I am talking about the same desire of a Christian. A Christian when we enter the kingdom of God, do we desire God's will, because a person who doesn't even know God can desire a certain will so much that he trains his entire life, he trains his body, he trains his mind, he trains his everything just to make sure that he can fulfill that will. He carried that weight on the shoulders for so many years. In fact, after cancer, he still want to try, why, it is really not for himself. There is some pride in it.

Christians are not supposed to be like that. Christians are supposed to be equally resolved or even more resolved than athlete such as this. We have to be so resolved that we will, Paul says, I beat my own body so that I will do what is right. He even said, you must be so resolved not to sin that if you sin with a certain part of your body, you should cut it. But no one does it. Martin Luther was so resolved. We must see some of the shows that try to depict what he went through and how he disciplined himself, how much resolve he had to do the right thing and the will of God. That's why we have the change but Christians are supposed to be like that. It says,

² As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.

If Christians live a right life here, we will be abused. People say, "Oh, you are holier than Thou". I remember a lot because I was a pastor's kid, growing up with my youth group. I suffered a lot of abuse which was very painful. But that's the point that Peter is trying to make. When we are Christians, we no longer join those who do what is usual anymore. In fact, today there is a movement that church people do the same thing as outside people do. It is no big deal. I don't think so, Peter is saying actually the Christians no longer are able to do what they usually do, not able to partake in those feasts. You are not able to go and do this, you are not able to do that, you are supposed to follow the authority, you are supposed to pay your tax because everybody is cheating, don't want to pay the tax. It was like that, but the problem is we are not willing to do it is because we want our own will rather than God's will, but the difference is, he says, just as Christ suffered to do God's will we must do the same

thing. We should surprise the world by our resolve to do what is right. That's the mark of a Christian. That's a mark of a chosen people, a royal priesthood. That's what we look like. Our response is that we are resolved and we will intentionally still go through that suffering if it is the right thing to do. Is that the gospel that we preach today? Is that the story we tell the world today? The problem is most of us think, you know what it is okay, that is what is going around, we got God's grace. God's grace is enough for us. I think we are preaching the gospel two lopsided, because it goes onto say,

5 But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

So what I am trying to say is we are accountable to God and the gospel that has been presented to us. All of us will be held accountable; living and dead. So those that have gone before us, who never see Christ is the same thing, they will be held accountable to the same gospel of Jesus Christ. Our responses reflect our maturity of faith in understanding that our actions are responses ultimately reflect whether the gospel is true or not. The gospel has been made known to all even those that come before us. So no one can say, I did not know and responded wrongly, especially us in this room.

We are called to live by the spirit, as such are held accountable and receive judgment because of our response. One of the things, that is really hard to ask this generation and the previous generation, is to ask them to read their bibles. That basic discipline and suffering. If they go to their jobs, they read all the staff manual, the staff handbook, they read the terms and conditions of some people. But the point is why is it that even in our calling to be, we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ, more than that we are called to be soldiers of Jesus Christ and we are soldiers who don't know our own firearm. It doesn't seem like we are soldiers, it seems like we are civilians then when suffering comes, we are scattered. It is scary because if that's the case are we truly disciples, are we truly living by the spirit, are we truly saying, it is God's will.

I remember a true story and this was a persecution that was going on in the North. It was a church and people came in and they began to destroy everything and gathered everyone around then they took, there was a picture of Jesus on the wall and they took the picture and smashed it on the ground and then they say, if you want to live you spit on it and you will get to live. So one by one the church members went forward and they began to spit and they left the church and then there was left this little girl, she went up and tore her clothes, wipe the spit off and she was killed. That's a soldier of Christ.

I don't think it is an accident like that, all the sermons that we are going through the series, that we have been going through in 1-Corinthians is going to talk about that. Actually, we didn't plan it right, it is not the leader sit down there and we are going to have this season to talk about suffering. It all line to come to this point and it looks the church today has forgotten, we are accountable to God for the gospel and if we are accountable to God for the gospel, it will cause us to suffer. It says

*⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore be **serious** and **discipline** yourselves for the sake of your prayers.*

It makes sense in line of talking about arming yourselves. How do you arm yourselves? Soldiers have to be serious and discipline, not just have the resolve in their head. They have to be serious about it. They have to be disciplined about it.

⁸ Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰ Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ¹¹ Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

So Christians should arm themselves with seriousness and discipline. They need to choose to take the will of God seriously and be disciplined. That means if you are called to be a doctor, you are called to be the best Christian doctor ever. If you are called to be a banker, you are called to be the best Christian banker ever. If you are called to be a toilet washer, you are the best toilet washer ever. I do it because I serve God. I do it because I am a soldier of God. Paul was telling Timothy

[2 Timothy 2:3-7](#)

*³ Endure suffering along with me, as a **good soldier of Christ Jesus**. ⁴ Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. ⁵ And **athletes** cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. ⁶ And **hardworking farmers** should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. ⁷ Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.*

Christians are no longer civilians. You are enlisted in the army of God. We are fighting against the principalities of darkness. If we see a soldier who is undisciplined, we will definitely think that he is not a soldier. A lot of Christians look like that. When we stand out for our faith we are going to suffer. We have to choose to take the will of God seriously and be disciplined. Our relationship with God is at stake if we doesn't.

When you sin your relationship with God is affected and you are not able to pray. When you know you have sin in your life, you will not pray. So in this case, if you are not serious and disciplined and if you know that you are not really a soldier and you are really behaving like a civilian you dare not ask for anything, you have to realize that once you do that your relationship with God is affected.

It is even more serious when do something that is not what God requires of us and he says, what must we do then, how do we arm ourselves, maintain these attributes no matter how much you suffer for it:

- Love for one another
- Hospitality
- People that are not complainers
- Good Stewards Serve one another
- Speak the word of God

➤ Serve with God's strength

This is the attitude of Christ. When Christ was crucified on the cross, he says please forgive them for they don't know what they do. In fact, Judas was the one that was going to betray him. Jesus actually invited Judas, treated Judas with the same honor, even though he knew that Judas was going to betray him. He remained as hospitable as he could, and he did not complain. Judas received the same grace we all had but indeed in the end he chose to spend it away. But we must take that same attitude. Jesus Christ knowing that he had all the gifts, didn't say, I keep it for myself, which he could have in all his right, but he did it anyway for us. He spoke the word of God only and serve.

When you have done something that you know is not right, or is sin, you will not be able to pray. You will not be able to have the relationship with your father like God means it to be.

*If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that **in all things God may be praised** through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. ¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the **fiery ordeal** that has come on you to **test** you, as though something strange were happening to you.*

In Colorado a court rules a bakery illegally discriminated against gay couple. So this gay couple came to this bakery and asked them to bake a gay cake and they refused as Christians. They say, that is against our belief and guess what, they got sued and they got the first court order was that they have to pay a fine and they have to admit they are wrong, and they still have to bake the cake. In Canada, a couple lost their foster child because they were not willing to tell the child about Easter Bunny.

We are living in a world today, making our Christian stand these are the things that we are going to face on a daily basis in the time to come. In fact a lot of people say, Christians discriminate. Actually we don't discriminate, just because we stand on what we believe does not mean we discriminate, and we are going to suffer these kinds of things. We have Christians who are suffering for their faith in this way. In the same ways, we here also have to suffer for our faith when we become Christians.

What if God calls us to stand up for our faith and we lose our businesses because we stand for our faith. What if one day we stand up for our faith and we lose our children because we stand for our faith. Are you willing to go through that suffering to do what is right? This is what Peter is talking about. You are called to be soldiers not to be refugees. We have a refugee mentality, rather than staying back here and fight we migrate. Little bit suffering only and we go already. We should not be surprised that we will suffer. It will test us but it says, it will test us, but we must not see it as something that Christians should not experience. So anything the prosperity gospel teaches you in terms that Christian should not suffer, you suffer means you have no faith. That's not true. You will suffer. If you haven't suffered much yet, it will come let me tell you, because Christ suffered and so you will be.

The ordeal is not something that may be easy but just as Christ was able to suffer, we are able to suffer because we have Him. I think one thing about Christian suffering and the difference between Christian suffering is not self-inflicted, it is something that happens because of sin and one day this suffering will end, but the next thing about Christian suffering is that Christ

when he was in Gethsemane he was not alone. As a church we have to suffer together and tell each other, come on we can go through this, no matter how hard it is.

You want to stand for your belief, ultimately you will have to pay the price. Christians shouldn't be surprised of suffering; you should be expecting to go through some kind of ordeal. It is not something easy, but God will be there. It says in verse 11, God will supply strength so that ultimately, He receives the glory. When we don't have strength only God can get the glory. When we have strength, we claim the glory.

Are we called to be civilians or are we called to be soldiers? Of course, soldiers, we all want to go into army but we don't want to exercise. We don't behave like soldiers. Christ behaved like a soldier to the cross. If Christ choose to walk that path, so that we may live. If he calls us, we are called not to go and take things and beat yourself and suffer, but to walk the same road and if he calls you to suffer for someone else, if he calls you to soldier up, if he calls you to take a bullet for your enemy, if he calls you to forgive someone that you never want to forgive, man up soldier, be serious and discipline, choose to do what Christ did because you are not civilians, we are soldiers.

Take this as a joy. In the end, all the early church too all their suffering with rejoicing. With the example of Christ, we know that we all can go through this because we have Jesus Christ.