

Book	1-Peter
Study	Study 14
Topic	Persevering in Suffering
Reference	1 Peter 4:13-19
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Speaker	Pastor Leon Lim

We learned in our last study that we need to be resolved like a soldier to face suffering. If you want to be a soldier, we enter the army, not because we go there and want to shake leg. We go into the army knowing that there is work to do. If we want to defend our country, if we want to save the world, there is going to be suffering. You are going to see things. So, the Christians are supposed to respond in the same way and when we come into Christian faith, most of us come, we think, “Oh! We want blessing, we want a good life, we want all comforting things”. Sorry to say, in most of the Bible that we read, it tells us the story that if you actually really want to follow the faith, you are going to have to suffer for it and so you want to be resolved to be a Christian, you have to accept that and suffering ends in 1-Peter 4:12. We shouldn’t be surprised after becoming a Christian when suffering comes our way.

How are we going to persevere when you suffer because a lot of us are more worried about the ‘how’ then whether suffering will come, because we know suffering will come but some of us are now a bit afraid. If suffering come, will I survive it or not. Will it deny Christ when a gun is put to my head? We all have different levels of pain endurance. We all have different kinds of ideas, but all of us are called to persevere. So the question is how. Today, we will try to answer that. So, if we look at persevering in suffering, Peter talks about in three parts.

1. Suffering is a Present Reality we Share with Christ (v13-14)
2. Suffer like the Godly (v15-18)
3. Suffering as Faith in the One Who is Faithful (v19)

So it says,

*¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you **participate in the sufferings of Christ**, so that you may be **overjoyed when his glory is revealed**.*

We participate not in the suffering of our own sufferings; we participate in the sufferings of Christ. So we share in the suffering of Christ. It is not that we don’t suffer.

SUFFERING IS A PRESENT REALITY WE SHARE WITH CHRIST (V12-14)

Suffering produces joy that’s what he says. That’s the most funny thing to hear. I think if you don’t suffer enough that’s why you won’t see this as making sense. When you suffer enough, you would realize that it produces joy and we will talk about that in a little while. Because most of us have an idea when we think about suffering produces joy. It says, success tastes sweeter if you’ve worked for it. If you work for something, you suffer to get it, you appreciate it more. This is the principle most people teach about suffering. So if Christians suffer more then we understand the sufferings of Christ. Then we will understand how much he redeemed us.

For us success is equal to joy. Failure is equal to sadness. That's our world view on a lot of things we do. If I feel successful, I feel happy. If I feel like a failure, I feel I am suffering. But is that true? Because in all ideas of success, Jesus was a failure. When 1-Peter was written Jesus was considered as a failure, a heretic because the Jews saw him as untrue. They even tried to kill Christians; Paul was part of them once. So in every sense of a success, Jesus isn't. If we think this equation is correct, then Jesus is a failure. So success cannot be equal to joy. So then we've got to ask this question. Then what is Peter referring to as successful. What makes someone successful biblically? And the answer is definitely not that you suffer a lot, you suffer too much, therefore you suffer more then you are more successful. That cannot be also.

But he is not talking about how you are successful in your career. So success is measured so differently. Let's talk about suffering as producing joy. The first thing we must realize is that

- Undeserved suffering because of Christian faith is evidence of future eschatological deliverance, which will bring the ultimate joy a human being can experience.

So we are not talking about joy now. We are talking about joy when Christ comes again. Because the real joy that you have is little. Now use the analogy of marriage. Most people when talk about marriage, they talk about how beautiful their courtship is, how beautiful their proposal is, nowadays the youngsters like to record their proposals. But anyway for us, it is the same way. Actually those that get married for many years, the real joy in comparison is the present reality you have with your partner and the future prospect of living with that person until Jesus comes again.

When you put hope that your marriage is going to get better and you suffer through whatever you have to suffer, that is where the joy is. Nowadays we are having a toxic culture. The media tells us the moment you start suffering, you quit and you give up on the marriage. When all of us know that we went through suffering with our spouses that it gets sweeter after that. As you look towards the fact that God is the one that will help you finish your marriage.

There were so many sufferings in my 9 years of marriage that I thought that it is not going to go far. It is the same thing with the suffering that produce joy. We are not looking for a temporary joy. We are looking for a joy that is complete. Now we might have some glimpse of joy, sometimes in a marriage we have good times and we have bad times but anyway we are looking towards a fulfilment, a true joy that we will experience.

- Our faith WILL be vindicated

That is one of the hardest thing to see for people who are suffering. When you really go through that suffering, you ask yourself, will I be vindicated in the end. Peter is saying that, you will, you will be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. He didn't say that the joy will come now, it can if you really understand the end and you understand who you put your faith in, you can experience the joy now, but the thing is he promises, the promise is that we will be overjoyed when his glory will be revealed. The promise is not that you will feel joy now, but you will be overjoyed. It will be beyond just the joy that you experience now in fact.

- Suffering now is better than the suffering to come if we deny and reject Christ.

That's the next thing and we must realize it. You can have all the joy you want now and all the nonsuffering you want now but watch out you will suffer for eternity. Suffering now and suffering the things that you maybe suffering being persecuted for Christ, standing up to do the right thing, you better do it now. So that's what happens. So suffering for joy really means these things.

Now let's move on to the next few verses

¹⁴If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

It says that we are blessed if we suffer for Christ. A lot of people says that I am very blessed when I get my parking lot when I pray, I am very blessed when my results come out good, I am very blessed that God healed me from this sickness, Peter is saying that I am blessed if I suffer. If I suffer for Christ, I am truly blessed. And this was definitely you can see in Acts. You can see the stories of how the church was saying that, if I suffer in the name of Christ, I really am happy to do it. In 2019, the church today thinks that coming to church building is suffering, listening to parents is suffering, studying is suffering. All these becomes synonymous with suffering. Instead of the suffering that comes when you want to do what is right. How many of us suffer because we do what God ask us to? If you are insulted in the name of Christ, it is a blessing, because if people can see Christ in you, isn't that a good thing. If people cannot see Christ in you and don't insult you and think you are just like the rest, I think that is more insulting.

When people insult you because of your willingness to do things that are right in God's eye, that is more than a blessing than a curse. Because people are seeing you stand for your faith. Imagine if you say, you are a Christian, but nobody can see it, nobody insults you for it, something is wrong. Because a Christian is supposed to look like fools to the world. So I see it as a blessing but is not easy. Blessing is not equal to feeling good. Blessing is equals to God's will. The blessing that we can do what is good and it says very clearly that when you suffer God's presence is with you.

So let me break it down. Suffering equals evidence of genuine faith. That is what I call blessing. Blessing is not feeling good. Because if you are insulted for Christ that's a blessing. So it is an evidence of your faith, therefore you are blessed. Blessing comes not because of the opportunity for self-improvement but because of the presence of God. So most of us think, oh we suffer and all these kinds of things because it builds character, we will become more like Christ. That is not the purpose of Peter. Peter is not saying that suffering is a blessing in disguise because it builds character. Whether true or not, it is probably not Peter. Peter does not see suffering in the name of Jesus as beneficial to the believer in anyway other than the evidence of genuine faith.

Blessing comes not because of an opportunity for self-improvement but because of the presence of God, because you know God is with you. Suffering is never an absence of God; it is when his power is powerfully present.

We take suffering like we are alone; it is the absence of God but most of the time when we are suffering, God is present and that's the promise we see here in Peter. When you are insulted in the name of Christ, that is when God is with you. It is a promise. We are blessed because the same spirit that is in us, that is with the Messiah, is with us who suffer for him. The words that Peter was saying here was referring to something that is quoted in Isaiah and in Isaiah itself that passage was about the Messiah. When we look here it says,

, *you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you*

It is in reference to a passage in Isaiah and when the spirit of God rest upon you in this reference, it is talking about, actually it is a whole prophecy of the Messiah that the spirit of God will rest upon him. So the same spirit that rest upon the Messiah, rest on us. So that is the assurance that Peter wants to say and all the people that he was speaking to know this reference.

Often times suffering has been equated as the absence of God, Peter is saying contrary to what we think. Suffering assures us of the presence of God. The spirit of God with us. God has not abandoned the Christian who suffers on the contrary. God is powerfully present in the experience of those who are suffering for Christ. For it is only by the power of the spirit that one finds the resolve and strength to live an uncompromising life in society that is hostile to one's fundamentals convictions and value. Once willingness to suffer rather than to compromise indicate the inner transformation of the sanctifying work of the spirit.

A famous TedTalk presenter was talking about how actually what ensures success in life has more to do with the power of passion and perseverance with great than our talent. What we eventually accomplish may depend more on our passion and perseverance than our innate talent and the thing that I would like to add to this is, that we Christians are supposed to be the grittiest people on planet earth. We are supposed to be the most passionate and people who can persevere. Why? We have the perfect role model in Christ, someone who suffered with grit and passion and perseverance to the very end. We have that example. We have that role model. We cannot say, we don't have the role model. I can't imagine any of us going through the same suffering he did and being able to pull it through, but he says we can. We can because of the second thing, he helps us to be grittier.

So we see the example in the disciples later on. They all suffered way worse than Christ did, but they all stood for their faith, no matter what. All the disciples had been martyred. In fact, the way they were crucified was even worse than the way Christ did. I think it was Peter, tradition says that he didn't find it himself worthy to be crucified the way Christ was, he was crucified upside down. Did he do it out of his own passion? Did he did it out of his own perseverance. No, he did it out of the fact that he knew that Christ is with him.

So what does Peter say next?

¹⁵If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

We are supposed to suffer like the Godly.

Suffering is a mark of the believer. You bear that name if you suffer. So there are different ways we bear the name of God. This should be clear. There should be something that clearly marks us as believers or in comparison to the ungodly. There are different kinds of suffering that marks a believer. And then Peter is trying to say there are different kinds of suffering that is resulted in your own behavior. The ungodly behavior leads us to suffering. There is a difference between suffering that is caused by, there is suffering caused by misconduct and he doesn't differentiate between the misconducts. Whether big or small he considered it all sufferings caused by your own misconducts. If you suffer because of the consequences of your own mistakes that is not the suffering that I am talking about that marks a believer. It is a Christian suffering that comes out from bearing the name of Christ without shame.

It is a suffering that comes from making an intentional choice to do what Christ ask you to do instead of what your boss ask you to do. And it is tough. You must be willing to bear the name of Christ without shame, because anything you do can be misconstrued. So this calls for us to uncompromisingly stand, to not give up to any evil even if it results in rejection ostracism or persecution.

Our martyrs for Christian faith are at the all time high. People are standing up for their faith. To read this statistic, it bless my heart to know that there are not less people who are willing to stand firm for what they believe and suffer for it. There are more people today in church history that are willing to stand for their faith and that is amazing. I hope that when suffering comes to us we would part of the statistics that there are more martyrs than the other way around.

When you bear Christ name, most of us think it only talks about persecution that come from outside. Let me tell you that persecution can come inside church also. When you bear the name of Christ, sometimes inside church itself you are persecuted.

¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; 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?"^[a]

Suffering like the Godly, it begins with us. It is a battle for the righteous to be save. Can you imagine, he is using those terms. Here he is using the same language. It is a battle. It is warfare. We are also going to face fiery ordeal but our fiery ordeal that we go through now is nothing in comparison to the fiery judgment of God for the wicked. The judgment that is to come is already now being actuated in our life. So God's fiery judgment upon our lives, it begins with us, is one that purifies us like gold. This is what whole Peter is talking about. It is a test to purify us and so if you are being made to grow in your faith, to be purified, isn't that a blessing, because if in the end you are judged by the fire of God that comes in Revelations then that is not a blessing anymore.

Those who come true to their sufferings as pure and true believers are the ones that will receive salvation. Ultimately, true suffering will come to those who reject God. That is the real suffering. The suffering that we have now, it produces joy. That is what he is trying to say. The suffering that you have later, that's the real suffering you should be worried about. The suffering you have now, no more how difficult, will produce joy. That's the idea.

So I was talking about how this suffering does not just happen from the outside persecution, it can happen inside the church as well. Reverend Charles Simeon in 1783 was installed as the pastor of the church in Cambridge, England. Now that is supposed to be a good thing. Anyway in this church, this church did not share his joy. He was very happy to be appointed but they did not share his joy. Many of the prominent members of the church oppose his convictions on reaching the lost with the gospel, to show their displeasure they locked their pew boxes during the service and left them empty so that those who came to hear Simeon preach had to stand or sit in the aisles. Eventually God began to work, and Simeon's ministry had a powerful influence on the nation of England and the world through his efforts to encourage missionary work.

During the dark days of opposition Simeon wrote: *"In this state of things I saw no remedy but faith and patience.... It was painful indeed to see the church, with the exception of the aisles, almost forsaken; but I thought that if God would only give a double blessing to the congregation that did attend, there would on the whole be as*

much good done as if the congregation were doubled and the blessing limited to only half the amount. This comforted me many, many times, when without such a reflection, I should have sunk under my burden.”

So instead of seeing those people in the aisles as not enough, as his failures, he saw them as a blessing to the church and he said, Lord if we are suffering for right, I want you to bless them double, so because these people are going to be doubly effective for you. Wow! How did someone through that suffering see that and he said this, I could not see that if it was not for God.

Opposition does not mean that we are doing things wrong—often it is evidence that we are doing things right. If we allow ourselves to be deterred from doing anything unless we have complete approval, it is certain that we will never accomplish anything of value. Rather than being discouraged by opposition, we should take comfort in God’s faithfulness and keep on doing what is right.

Another story from England, Wilber Wilberforce. He suffered so many things, with his body, with his health, with his marriage, with everything, just because he believe that he was called by God to fight against slavery in the British Empire. He said, it was not his ability to persevere but it was God who helped him in that.

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

SUFFERING AS FAITH IN THE ONE WHO IS FAITHFUL

I think suffering would be so difficult if we know that God is not faithful. It is because of Christ himself faithful, no matter what suffering came his way, no matter how much insult we put on him, he was faithful. It was our savior who carried us even though we nailed him to the cross. That is why Christians can suffer with joy. Because we suffer not according to our own will or our own misconduct, we suffer because it is God’s will. This means responding as Christians not by retaliating or fighting back but entrusting our lives to the faithful creator.

How is this done? Do God’s will.

What is it? It is to do good.

So here it is, when you are suffering, your response as Christians is do good works, turn the other cheek, repay evil for good, submitting to authorities, of course the list goes on, on how we can do good and do what God call us to do.

Keep doing good (perseverance). That’s the word. The interpretation for perseverance is not keep doing what you like, keep on passionately pursuing what you want, keep doing good, keep doing God’s will, persevere. And it must be done not grudgingly, it must be done cheerfully and with great enthusiasm.

When you are going through the suffering, there is no joy. Deep in the heart of Jesus, he is willing and passionate and persevering, he is keeping what is good and you don’t see the joy right on the face now but how many people I have read over history when they see Jesus they don’t see him sad, they always paint Jesus with a friendly face. He has went through the worst. Jesus knows that not only he can go through that, you can because he is with you. We are sharing in the suffering of Christ. That means we are continuing the work of Christ while he is absent.

In the absence of Jesus, the world has you as an example that if you suffer for your faith and suffer to do what is right, you would do it just like Jesus did with great enthusiasm. That is the mirroring of Christ that we are called upon. Rejoicing doesn't mean doing it with a smiling face, it means we count it all joy to suffer in his name. We should count it all joy to do the right thing. To know that Jesus can help us to respond that way and to know that Jesus would have responded that way, I knew that I can do all things for Christ who strengthen me. That's how I understand it first.

Such, we can wear Christ as our badge of honor. Instead of thinking, all the things. You see they were going through remarkable shame; we are talking about the honor-shame culture. They stood for Christ. We know that in the end if we persevere and we keep doing good, despite what we go through, the final end is a fulfilment of a greatest joy, we will meet our savior face to face.

So remain faithful. When you suffer only the Lord can comfort you. I pray that you understand this that the Lord is faithful, no matter how much you suffer through something, God will ultimately vindicate you.

Peter is saying that Lord you are my guide, I rely on you, I put my hope in things not seen, your promises are true. His promise is that you will be overjoyed when you see him again. Let us come together and make this commitment, before suffering comes remember that he is faithful, so that we won't forget when the time comes or if you are suffering now because you choose to do what is right, I don't know what pain you may be going through but I know one thing my God is faithful. He will never leave you and never forsake you and I will be praying that God just like the story of the footprints in the sand, God will be carrying you through these moments of suffering.

God is faithful to us even though we cannot understand and all we can pray for is God to carry us through and proof his faithfulness and that his joy, not our own joy, will be our strength.