

# 1 Peter 4:12-19 "Trusting God Through Suffering"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

For a moment, let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, Father, you know how there are times when we have a sense that we could maybe say something about Christianity or the gospel or our hope, but we know that if we say something, or we have a sense if we say something, it'll hurt our reputation or people might laugh at us or make jokes about us.

And so, Father, you know those times when we have those opportunities and we turn away from doing it because we don't want to be mocked. We don't want to be thought of as fools. We don't want to be thought of as bad people. And Father, we're so thankful that you know our heart. You know the problems that we have and the things that we're tempted to do and the things that we're tempted to avoid that we should do. So, Father, we praise you. We're grateful for your profound knowledge of each of us. And we give you thanks and praise that your word speaks to the real us in our real world and our real situation. And we ask, Father, that you tune our hearts this morning to hear your word and to receive the healthy music, the healthy food that you desire to give us this morning, that we might be free, that we might do good, that we might bring you glory. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So, a couple of weeks ago in one of the coffee shops which I frequent where I'm a regular, within a day of each other, I had two very interesting conversations. The first one was with this fellow. I'll call him Andy. I have to watch. I don't say his name out loud in public by accident, but we'll call him Andy. There happened to be a bigger lineup to order a coffee. And so, I was in front of him and we got chatting and I just said, oh, by the way, are you an Ottawa boy?

[ 3 : 06 ] I was just making conversation. And he said, yeah. And I said, oh, where'd you go to high school? And he told me where he went to high school and he asked me where I went to high school because I did grade 10 and up. Here in Ottawa, I did earlier grades in Montreal, actually in Laval, a Jewish suburb, actually, of Montreal. And then he just asked me a little bit about high school and I asked him about it. And then he really, his whole face and demeanor changed. He said to me, he didn't like high school. And then he said, I was terribly bullied. I was terribly bullied all the way through high school. And it's really, you could, I mean, this is 40 years ago, probably, guessing his age, but 40 some odd years ago. And when he said it, you could still really see that it had impacted him and affected him. And all I could say was, that must be so hard. Like, I didn't know what else to say.

And then it was my time to order the coffee and he, and I'll talk to him again because I see him all the time. Then about a day or two later, I talked to another fellow who was a regular and he just making some chit chat. And he asked me if I grew up in Ottawa. And I asked him about where he went to high school, where I went to high school. Turns out we probably overlapped by a couple of years.

And he was in sort of the rival school closest to the high school that I went to. And for some reason, he wouldn't have known that I just had this conversation a day or two earlier with this fellow. He wasn't even in the coffee shop at that time. And he doesn't know that fellow, in fact, to my knowledge. And all of a sudden, he just said, you know what, you know, one of the things about high school that I look back on now as I'm older, because he's probably about my age. And he said, I realized there was a lot of bullying that went on in my high school. Now, the two guys didn't go to the same high school, just in case you're wondering. But he said there was a lot of bullying in the high school that I grew up in. And, you know, at the time, I thought, oh, well, the bullying's not that bad. It's just words. Not much physical, just words. But now that I'm older, I realized that that was actually probably way worse for people. Like, it's just like a really random thing for him to say, that it was probably way worse, the words, the insults that we give to people. And I didn't ask him, but the way he said it made me wonder if he'd been one of the bullies that, in fact, had been doing those things. I mention all of this because the Bible's going to talk about the problem of insults this morning. And it's going to talk about the problem of suffering, suffering, but suffering in particular in the context of insults. And this is actually like a, this is, I mean, all the texts in the Bible are very important, but this is very important because so many of us struggle with insults. I would, I wonder sometimes if one of the reasons that people walk away from the Christian faith is because they'd rather avoid insults. And I wonder sometimes if one of the reasons why people don't want to actually take the step of becoming a Christian is because they're worried about how their friends and family and coworkers will see them if they become a Christian. That there's, because in Canada, we really value trying to figure out a way of life where you never suffer. Like, in fact, if you were to ask Christian, many Canadians, is one of your goals in life to never suffer? I think most people would say, yeah, that's, that'd be one of my goals. One of my goals in life is to never suffer. So let's look. We're going to look and see what the Bible says.

The Bible walks right towards this issue, and I think it has great wisdom. It's, it's, it's, it's 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 12 to 19. 1 Peter 4, 12 to 19. And actually, one of the things, I'm going to begin with the end. So sorry about that, Claire. I'm going to go to verse 19 first, and then go to 12 to 12 and then, and then come down. This isn't the summary of all of what Peter's talked about.

[ 7 : 01 ] He's talked about suffering a fair bit. There's going to be an important bit to the last little bit of a first Peter. But this is a really important summary statement. And I, I actually, I want to share it with you first, then we'll go back and we'll look at insults and all the things to do with suffering. But I just think it's such a, such a beautiful verse. If you would put it up on the screen, it's verse 19.

Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. And I'll, I'll hopefully mention it again. The word which is translated there is entrust. Some of your Bibles will use the word commit. But if you look and you, you try to figure out the last words that Jesus said on the cross, of course, the second to last word is it is finished. And then the very last thing is he says into your hands, Father, I commend my spirit. I commit my spirit. And that word commend or commit is the same word as entrust.

So you have to wonder, that would have been something because there were women, and then a lot of other people who observed the crucifixion would have later become Christians. And you have to wonder if, if even as Peter was writing this, if there's a bit of a catch in his mouth, a little bit of a catch in his heart, to see, to recommend this, that this is what Jesus did as he's dying on the cross. But what's so beautiful? I don't, I don't know how people can go through hard times in life if there isn't a God that they can pour out their hearts to. I mean, if you get nothing else from my sermon, I mean, that's just it. Are there challenges to being a Christian? Are there, is there a cost to being a Christian? Yes, yes, yes. But I don't know how you can go through life without having a God who really is there, not just imaginary, but really is there, that you can be reconciled to, and you can pour out your heart to, and that you know that he loves you, that he doesn't crush you.

I, this week, did I write down her name? I hope I wrote down her name, because I can never pronounce it, and I apologize if I mispronounce it, but there's this organization in England called Unherd, U-N-H-E-R-D, and it's, it's, it publishes articles for those who don't want to think like the herd.

So it's trying to unherd you, so you don't think like the herd. Anyway, they published, they put out a debate or a conversation this, a week or two ago in New York City between Christopher Dawkins, who's a legendary atheist, and, and here's, where's her name? Iann Hersey Ali.

[ 9 : 46 ] And some of you might have heard of, of her. You might have heard, you know, some of you might remember about 15 years ago, there was a Dutch filmmaker stabbed to death, I think in the streets of Amsterdam, and he was stabbed to death because he was making a, a video that was critical of, of, of Islam, and the, the person who starred in the video was, was Iann Hersey Ali, and she had to, to, to be in hiding for quite a while because of multiple death threats to her.

But she grew up a fundamentalist Muslim. She became, renounced all of that, became an outspoken atheist, a social commentator, a best-selling author, public intellectual, close friend of all of the, the leading atheist writers, including Christopher Dawkins.

And about a year ago, she shocked everybody in Unheard of saying she'd become a Christian. And there's been a lot of talk about whether it was a real conversion or whatever. Anyway, there was this conversation that she had in New York City just a week or two ago, you can see it on the YouTube of Christopher Dawkins and her having a conversation. And one of the things that he says to her is that Christianity is obsessed with sin. And without missing a beat, she said, that's not how I read the Bible. When I read the Bible, it's obsessed with love.

It's obsessed with love. And they go on and have a bit of a conversation about that. And it's a very perceptive thing, I think, to, to see. So anyway, we have this, I don't know how you, how you can endure suffering if there isn't a God who really is there. And it's the God that is revealed in the person of Jesus. And it's a God who is obsessed with love. So that you can pour out your heart when you're having really hard times, knowing that he'll hear you and not crush you.

He'll hear you and not diminish you. He'll hear you and not hate you. I don't know how you can live without that. But let's get to this verse. If you go back to me with verse 12, it begins with something which is very off-putting to Canadians. Look at verse 12 of chapter 4. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you all, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you were insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Now just pause here. Lots of interesting things here, but here's the part that would be very off-putting to a lot of Canadians. It says this, Beloved, verse 12, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. Now that's the part which is off-putting.

[ 13 : 08 ] What he's saying is, if you are a Christian and if you have committed your life to Christ and you are trying to follow him, there will inevitably be times when people insult you, when people think less of you. It might mean you don't get the promotion, you don't get invited to the parties or the dinner parties. It will cost you. And that's not strange. It's not a bug that has to be fixed.

And this is going to explain in a moment. It's in a sense a design feature of the whole Christian, what it means to, why Christ came and why he died and why he rose again and what he calls us to. Now, for a lot of Canadians to hear this, you'd say, Okay, George, you just gave me one more reason not to be a Christian. Like, George, don't you think the goal of life should be to suffer as little as possible? And you're saying that if you become a follower of Jesus, there are going to be times when people insult you and belittle you and scorn you?

Like, George, really? That's what you want to tell me? Like, why would anybody become a Christian? Like, surely, George, you agree that the goal of life should be to avoid suffering. And in fact, in this way, Buddhism and much of its Eastern religions and secular thought all agree. They have different types of techniques, although Canadian secular thought is quite happy to borrow different techniques from Buddhism and Hinduism and turn them into a type of a therapy and a self-help type of thing, all of them to avoid suffering because most Canadians agree that the goal of life is to have as little suffering as possible because suffering is inherently meaningless.

[ 15 : 03 ] Suffering is inherently meaningless and bad. Now, there's a problem with this which is not reflected upon very much by the average Canadian or people throughout the world. Some of you have heard me share how a few years ago there was a well-known actress who, she was asked if there was one thing she had, like, a godlike power to change one thing in the world, what would it be? And what she said is if she had godlike power to change one thing in the world, she would get rid of guilt. Nobody would feel guilt. And as I've shared before, maybe you're hearing it for the first time, I don't expect you to remember everything I say. I couldn't tell you how long ago I said it or anything. But the person doing the interview obviously thought this was a piece of wisdom that would be, oh, okay, she said that, let's write that down. That's a keeper.

That's something I want to remember. But the unintended consequence of her advice is she just wished that all human beings become sociopaths and psychopaths. Because what characterizes sociopaths and psychopaths, the definition of the two of them is a bit fluid, might be one or the other, depends how you work it, is a person who feels no guilt. Now, in fact, when I immediately read it, when I read it, I immediately thought of that. She just wishes that she was a sociopath or a psychopath.

Like, does she realize? Does the newspaper writer thinking this is a real wise thing I want to write down just realize that if he wishes that he never experiences guilt again, that he's actually wishing that he becomes a sociopath or a psychopath? We could add that now to a raging narcissist who don't seem to feel any guilt no matter how bad they treat others. Really? That's your goal in life? So how does this fit with suffering? Well, there's a very, very simple analogy there, which is exactly the same, which is that if that is actually the goal of you as a Canadian, or somebody else, to live a guilt-free life, you've just become the people in the stories that everybody hates, that nobody wants to be. Now, it depends on whether the types of novels or movies that you like to watch. I often like police novels or private detective things, you know, where there's a death or a robbery or some great tragedy and people are trying to be rescued, et cetera, et cetera. But one of the enduring themes in books and movies like that, you read the John Sanford Prey novels, you read the Michael Connolly Prey, Michael Connolly Bosch novels, I could go on and on and on. You read the Joe Pickett novels, great novel series of a game warden in Wyoming, if you've not read them by C.J. Box. But in all of these things, what characterizes the hero is that he is obsessed, maybe that's too strong a word, but he is deeply committed to doing what is right, to making sure there's justice. And not only does he, of course, have to deal with, and I could also do the Sue Grafton, Kinsey Mulholland novels, to have a woman author in there, a woman hero. So it's not just that they're all men heroes, it's the same thing with her novels.

And in all of these cases, not only do they have to deal with the people who've done wrong and try to capture them and try to figure out, like, who the guilty person is and bring them to justice, but they also have to deal with the time servers, bean counters, who don't give a hoot about this. They have to fight the bureaucrats and the people who only want the thing to go away and don't really care if it ends up being, if the right person is captured or the wrong person is captured. They want to be able to do their day, they want to be able to go home, they want to have no suffering, they want to have no bother, they don't want the paperwork, they don't want any of that type of things. And so these heroes are trying to not only pursue that which is right and good and just, but they're also having to deal with this bureaucracy and often captains and others and politicians who just want to have a problem-free, suffering-free life. And let me tell you, I can't imagine that anybody reads those novels and say, dang, I'd like to be that boss. I'd like to be the person who has no concern for justice. I'd like to be that person. I'd like to be that person who's just, you know, whatever, don't do it, too much bother, who cares, I just want to go home and, and I don't know, watch Netflix.

[ 19 : 43 ] Like, nobody wants to be that person who reads those novels or watches those movies. But if your philosophy and theology of life is one, that it's going to be a life which has as little suffering as possible, you've just wished that you've become the one in the books that nobody wants to be. You see, this is what, this is why, like, if you remember verse 19, that, you know, at the end of the day, we need to entrust or commit ourselves, our very selves, at a very deep level into the hands of a faithful creator and continue to do good, is that as we've seen over previous weeks, what the Bible is saying this is, if you desire to live a life which is committed to doing good, is committed to doing justice, is committed to mercy, is committed to compassion, is committed to generosity, is committed to forgiveness. If you are committed to do those things, you will be insulted.

And people will not, will look down their nose at you, and you will run into trouble. It is inevitable. And so the Bible is casting before us, at the end of the day, a far more beautiful vision, and in our, and if, if the average person is honest, on one hand, they, they wish there was a way of pursuing that vision, where they're never going to be insulted, they're never going to be looked down upon, or anything like that, but at the end of the day, that's really, most people would say, do you, do you want to just be a, is your goal in life to be a Netflix-watching, couch-sitting, bean counter, or is your goal in life to be committed to doing that which is good, and true and just.

And at least at a surface level, we'd know that's what we want to be. That's the second one's what we want to be. And that's really what the Bible is just saying. When it says in verse 12, do not be

surprised at the firing trial that comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

It's just saying, listen, if you're committed to doing that which is good, and in particular here as Christians, because it's not just that you're doing good, but that part of doing good for us as Christians is to tell the world, death doesn't win.

There is a God, and that God is a God of love. From all eternity, the Father has loved the Son, and the Son has loved the Father, and the Holy Spirit has loved the Father, and the Son, and from all eternity, there is a God of love who loves you and loves you so much that in real life, not just a once upon a time story, not a Santa Claus story, not a work of fiction, not a work of mythology, but in real life, this God who really does exist, who really is a God of love, seeing our desperate need and our inability to fix ourselves or save ourselves, sent his Son to live amongst us, to ultimately die on the cross for us, to be the one who can reconcile us to him, and this is news for you.

[ 22 : 57 ] It's news for you. And our hope and prayer is that you will say yes. That's sounds too good to be true. Well, it's not too good to be true. It's actually true.

Not too good to be true. It's actually true, and it can be true for you, and that's, and if that means that we get insulted, we get insulted. Now, one of the problems that lurks in our culture is the problem of meaninglessness, and most of Canadian culture deals with meaninglessness by distraction.

You don't have to think about the problems of death and suffering and meaninglessness if you can just get lost in TikTok, or just get lost in Netflix, or get lost in books, or get lost in alcohol, or drugs, or some other type of thing.

Other types of more sophisticated ways to practice distraction. But, you know, when it says here, verse 13, but rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. What this is telling us is this, that, I mean, in fact, as I've shared before many, many times, the Christian life begins when you either make a conscious decision around this, or you realize that you have made a decision around this at some point in time in your life, that you, in a sense, give your life to Christ, and you want to, you say, Jesus, I believe that you're my Savior, I want you to be my Savior, I come to you, please come to me, please come into me and be my Savior and my Lord. And when we have that, maybe not with those words, but we realize at some point in time, either we use those words or something like it, or we came to realize that at some point in time in our journey of life, that that's happened in us.

And the wonderful thing is that Christ actually does come in. And the Bible describes this wonderful thing that on one hand you can describe becoming a Christian as Christ, and in fact, God the Father and the Holy Spirit entering into you. And in another way you can understand it as entering into Christ. And so that in some ways then, Christ's story becomes yours. Not that you died to save anybody, but that you've entered him, and so the saving thing that he did on his life, sinless life and death upon the cross, and tasting all there is to taste of death, and his resurrection, when you put your faith and trust in the risen Christ, that whole history of Christ and what he did on earth, and in some ways becomes yours. You identify with him, and because he rose, it's because you are in him that he rose, you will rise, and death is not the final word about you, and that's the wonder of the gospel. And what Peter is saying here is that it's not just this mystical union that you have with

[ 25 : 56 ] Christ, which is unbelievably precious, but the story itself is precious. Because, you see, if you understand that the story is your story now, and you remember and understand the ending of that story, and then you understand as that story becomes more real to you, and the ending of the story becomes more real to you, it changes the story of the life that you've lived up until now, and the life you're living right now. Because the end of the story changes everything in the story. Like a very, very simple example would be if you, sorry for those of you who've never read or watched the Lord of the Rings, but if you've read or watched the Lord of the Rings, it's all about this quest to defeat this profoundly evil power that's going to overwhelm the entire world, and there's a connection that if you were able to destroy this ring that's sort of like the repository or the link to his power, if you can destroy in a particular mountain, it will bring an end to this unbelievably evil creature and all the evil and destruction that he's brought into the world. And the Lord of the Rings is a story of this quest by this little hobbit to be the one who's going to actually have to put the ring in this particular fire, and he suffers, and there's death, and he has trial and trial and trial. But if at the very, very end he comes to the edge and he isn't able to throw it in, well in fact there's nobody would have ever read that story. Like maybe it would have been read by five university professors

and one PhD student looking for a dissertation. The whole story, when he throws the ring into the fire at the end, spoiler alert, and evil is destroyed, all of the suffering of his life takes on a very different meaning. It was still suffering.

He still was parched. He still was beaten. He still, all those things still happened to him, but everything in the story is completely and utterly transformed. So when Peter is saying here, you think about the gospel, the thing which is so wonderful about the gospel is that on one hand the gospel is true. Jesus really did die on the cross. It's true because Jesus really did taste all there is to taste of death. It's true because he really did rise from the death. All of these things are completely and utterly true, but it's also a story that doesn't crush you, that ennobles you.

For much of the world and for much of time, there's some variation of the karma story that you live in. And the thing about karma is that if you are suffering, you deserve it. In a sense, if I see you suffering, all I can say to you is, sucks to be you. I'm not suffering. My karma is pretty good. It creates pride and it creates despair. And it's very interesting that even the goal of life of most Eastern religions and secular Canadians is all death. But if the end of all of our story is death, how can your life have any type of meaning? That's what's so wonderful and beautiful about the gospel. That God, the Son of God, actually dies and death is not the final word. There is a real resurrection that happens. A resurrection that you and I can share in when we put our faith and trust in him. And the end of the human story is not death. It's not nothingness. It is, in fact, that there will be a new heaven and the new earth. And that's why in verse 19, Peter can say, you need to just remember that you can entrust your hands to a faithful creator and commit yourself to doing good. And it's so wonderful. You can't commit yourself to nothingness and therefore do good. You can't commit yourself to meaningless death and therefore do good. Those things don't follow. There's nowhere to go and the story doesn't ennoble you. It doesn't empower you. And Peter is just saying, be gripped by this story. And we spent a long time on the first bit. We'll start to wrap it up. On the way to the end, Peter has a very, very interesting aside which we need to pay attention to. Let's look at his verse 15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Now, those are four very odd different types of problems, aren't they? Like, okay, yeah, yeah.

Obviously, if you're suffering in jail because you murdered somebody, like, of course, like, why shouldn't you do that, right? And, okay, like you were a thief, like you stole things and now you're sort of suffering. People don't like you. They want to give you a job. You spent some time in jail. We can sort of say, understand that. An evildoer? Well, evildoer sounds pretty strong and we could see that. And if somebody said, I'm a Christian, I'm suffering for being a Christian and, oh, by the way, I murdered somebody, you say, well, maybe you're suffering in jail because you murdered somebody.

And then if somebody said, well, I'm Christian and I'm suffering and the reason I'm suffering, you know, is because I'm a Christian, but they said, no, no, actually, aren't you in jail because you robbed a bank? Like, that's not because you're a Christian. And then if even somebody said, oh, no, I'm suffering for a Christian, but they said, no, don't you go around doing, like, these really, really terrible evil things? Maybe you're suffering because you do terrible, really evil things. It's not because you're a Christian. But then he adds meddler.

[ 31 : 38 ] Years ago, I was on a national leadership team and it was while I was still part of the Anglican Church of Canada. And we brought a person onto our team who would have told everybody, had a reputation that he was suffering for being a Christian in a very liberal diocese. And what we discovered was this about him. This is how one person put it.

He was a knit picker who left no knit unpicked. So we'd have a meeting and the minutes would come out. And I literally don't know what he did with his time. Because within that first week, we would get three emails a day about the minutes. And then over the next week, it would maybe go from down to two a day to down to one a day. And good grief, over two weeks, we probably had at least 25 or 30 emails.

Every email was two to three thousand words long. And then he'd get bothered when we didn't respond to them, which would create more emails. And so we got him off our leadership team. Not because he's a Christian.

I expect to see him in heaven. But because he was a knit picker who left no knit unpicked, he was a busybody and a meddler. And it's actually really good warning to us. You know, listen, listen. You know, it's like at the last synod that was in Ottawa. Somebody was just telling me this. You know, one of the coffee shops that I go to regularly is right near St. Peter's and St. Paul's.

And somebody was telling me that one of the clergy went in there with his collar and all dressed up like a priest. And then he gave the barista a hard time for having a name tag that said they on it and them. Okay, listen, you're not suffering for being a Christian. You're suffering for being a jerk. Okay? Like you're suffering for being a meddler in this particular case. Like don't say you're doing anything heroic. You're just being a busybody. Like just call them by their name. You know, if their name's Sue, call them Sue. You don't have to call them they. And you don't have to make a big show about it and look. You get the point. So just a good thing for us to take a step back about in terms of there's going to be enough things that you, if you actually walk towards opportunities to share the gospel, or if because of your love of Jesus and your allegiance to the gospel, you're going to do that which is right. Even if it means your whole team is mad at you, you want to do that which is just, even though your whole team is mad at you. There's enough things like that that will lead you to being insulted and put down. You don't need to add being a meddler. But now let's close. Let's look at the last few verses, 16 and following. Yet if anyone suffers as a

[ 34 : 35 ] Christian, let him not be ashamed. Let him glorify God in that name. Just a little pause. We're just very used to the word Christian nowadays. But the word Christian was actually coined by non-Christians to put down Christians. In a sense, when our LGBTQ plus friends, they a few years ago decided that rather than having queer as an insult, they'd proudly say they were queer. They're actually just learning something from the early Christians. You see, we don't think about it very much, but when Jesus died on the cross, he died a slave's death. He died a death that was designed to humiliate him and shame him to the maximum degree.

They strip him naked on a public place. They give him a very, very painful death, which is usually quite slow. And it's a great, like nobody would want to put down, by the way, I have a really fantastic family tree. My dad, my grandfather, my great-grandfather were all crucified. No, that wouldn't happen. If you, in fact, had been a Roman citizen, that was your case. You'd pretend you'd been adopted or something like that, that you didn't know who your parents or your grandparents were. And so it's non-Christians who call Christians Christians as a bit of abuse. And this is the first time in the Bible that a Christian says to other Christians, embrace the shame.

Embrace it. Look what it says. If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. In fact, here's another thing which is really important for us.

You know, the difference between guilt and shame, it's a very important difference. And most insults try to, and especially if there's a gang of insulters, what they want to do is try to create shame within you, not just guilt. When I feel guilty, it's because I know I've done something wrong. When I feel shame, it's because I start to believe that I'm wrong, that there's something actually deeply wrong about me, something not right about me.

And that's partially why I do the things I do. And what Peter's saying here is very important advice to us. The big advice is, listen, just fill your mind with who Jesus is and what his life was really like and what his death was really like and the truth of his resurrection and the truth of his coming again. Fill your mind with that. Have that story become so much part of how you think that it becomes how you see yourself and you see the world. And one of the best ways to combat shame or the growth of shame in your life is not just thinking about that story, but to spend time glorifying God. You know, like in a sense what we just did. I need you. Lord, I need you. Every hour I need you.

[ 37 : 31 ] And that's just so true. I need Jesus every hour. So do you. Anyway, verse 17, for it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? That's just really, I'm not going to spend time on it. It's really just saying, oh, verse 18, and if the righteous is scarcely safe, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? It's just also another thing which we could do if we had more time is that it's one of the ways for us to understand what insults and other things, it's a way that God is purifying Christians and purifying the church. But we're going through a process of purification because the justice, the judgment that we deserve, it's not because we don't deserve God's judgment, but the judgment that we deserve fell on Christ. But those who've rejected Christ, that judgment they deserve will one day come upon them. But for us, we're to see things as a type of purifying that's going on. And then this wonderful verse in closing, once again, therefore, a good verse to memorize, therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will. What is it according to God's will?

Remember, as I said, that God's will is that if you want to share the gospel, if you want to do good, if there's an opportunity for you to be generous, if there's an opportunity for you to be merciful or

forgiving or show compassion or to be just. And obviously not every time that you do this will people think badly of you, but there will be times when you do these things and people will think you're sort of nuts. They'll look askance at you. They'll think that you're a bit unhinged.

Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while continuing to do good. People mock you for being a Christian, be a Christian anyway.

People mock you for being generous, be generous anyway. People mock you for turning the other cheek, turn the other cheek anyway. People mock you for being concerned for the poor, be concerned for the poor anyway. People mock you for chastity, be chaste anyway. People mock you for not watching porn, Don't watch porn anyway.

Trust yourself to Creator. Be committed to doing good. That is the way of wisdom. I invite you to stand. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

[ 40 : 11 ] Father, we thank you for the sound of children outside and in the lobby. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit move deeply within each of these children.

Help them, Father, not to be consumed by the idols and fears and mockery and foolishness of our culture, but to be grounded and rooted in Christ and the wisdom that comes from knowing him and being immersed in your word, his word.

And we ask, Father, the same thing for ourselves. It is easy, Father, for the foolishness and the idolatry and the mockery and the idolatry and the foolishness and the mockery of this world to fill our souls so that we don't want to stand for you.

And we ask, Father, that you would just bring the truth of your word home to us, that you would make the gospel more and more real to our hearts, both in terms of our final destiny, but as the story that just governs how we should see who we are and what the world is really like.

And Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would do this gentle but deep and powerful work in us to make the gospel more real, that we might be wise, that we might be free, that we might pursue that which is good and just and merciful and generous and compassionate.

[ 41 : 31 ] Father, we ask that you would do this wonderful work not only in each of our lives, but in us as a church as a whole and in all of the gospel-shaped churches of this community. And we ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.