

Suffering for the Right Reason

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[0:00] Good morning. Good morning. I'm Steve Taberski. I think most people in here know me. A little one talked yesterday.

Now it's Mark the Older and Mark the Younger. Oh, okay. Anyway, I wanted to hear Mark the Younger talk. And it just totally slipped my mind.

I just completely forgot about it. And I remembered it this morning. I gave him a call and apologized. So this just goes to prove that back when I was working, I had this unfounded, it was totally unfounded reputation of always showing up on a free meal.

Oh, I agree. And yesterday proves it. I just, I didn't show up. It was a free meal and I didn't show up. But next week is Father's Day.

And next week there's a free meal. So I have another chance. Next week I'm looking forward to Father's Day. Because I'm a father. And actually I'm a great grandfather.

[1:32] Some of you already know what I'm getting at there. I'm a really, really, really good grandfather. Makes me a great grandfather. I like to think that.

Being a great grandfather is something that I want to do. So I look forward to seeing my grandchildren this week and next week and being a great grandfather to them.

So my, the scripture that I'm supposed to be going over is 1 Peter 4 verses 12 through 19.

So if you've got your Bibles, you might want to go ahead and turn there. There's been a theme, a reoccurring theme in this book of Peter and it's about suffering.

Every chapter so far that we've gone through, Peter has talked about suffering one way or another. Suffering. And in today's verses, he's going to be talking about suffering.

[2:38] And we're going to look at some do's and don'ts when it comes to suffering. So let's pray first and then we'll get started. Father, I thank you for the opportunity to stand here before the people that you love and died for.

These people that you care for each day, that you provide for, Lord. People that you listen to when we call out to you.

Lord, all these people, you know them better than they know themselves. And you love them, Lord. And all their faults, all their shortcomings, you still love us.

You still take care of us. When we don't deserve anything, Lord, that we get from you, you give it because you love us.

And now, Lord, as I open your word, this word that you gave to us, so that we can know how to live, how to be happy, how to prosper.

[3:46] Lord, I pray that we understand it. Help us, Father, to know you better and understand you better.

And, Father, help us in the future to be able to look back on what we know of you and lean on that, Lord. Because there's going to be times, Lord, where we need you more than others.

I pray, Father, that we'll be faithful to call out to you when we need you. But, Lord, just call you because you are our Father.

In Jesus' name, amen. All right. I'm going to be using the King James today. Ms. Brenda likes the King James. 1 Peter 4.12 says, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you.

The very beginning of this, the NIV says, dear friends. But Peter, in King James, he says, beloved. Beloved, that term to me holds a little bit more weight than dear friends.

[5:12] Because anytime you throw that word love in there, it brings it to a whole different level. So Peter's talking.

He's a pastor. These are the people that he loves. These are the people that he's wanting to shepherd. So he starts out beloved.

And he's talking about these fiery trials that are going to try you. Glenn had this in his sermon last week.

I don't even see Glenn in here. He talked about what Nero had done to some Christians. And let me tell you a little bit of a story.

When this 1 Peter was penned, we think it was written at the end of 64 A.D. Well, in the middle of 64 A.D., there was a historical account of the great fire of Rome.

[6 : 14] It's where Rome pretty much burned down. It was in July, I think, of 64 A.D. Now, there's thoughts and there's evidence that Nero, the emperor, started that fire.

It was orchestrated by Nero because he wanted to build. He didn't care for the layout of Rome the way it was. He didn't like the shanties.

He wanted to purge it out and build a bigger palace and rebuild. He was really into building. So there's historical accounts that there were actually soldiers that stopped people from fighting the fires.

And there were historical accounts of people who were paid to go around and start fires where there weren't fires. Well, it took six days.

It was burning for six days before they finally got it under control. And they got ahead of it. However, it reignited and for three more days it burned out of control.

[7 : 32] So most of the city was burned to the ground. Now, the people thought, had ideas that Nero was behind it. And so there was starting to be a revolt.

So Nero came, you know, had to do something to quell this. So he needed a scapegoat. And he said, we're going to blame the Christians.

Nobody likes those guys anyway. We're just going to blame the Christians for this fire. And so that's how the Christians began. They started like 200 years of severe persecution against the Christians. And one of the things Nero did to prove that he was blaming the Christians, and this is what Glenn was talking about, he would actually take Christians, live people, live Christians, and they would wrap them in some fire material, something burnable, combustible material, and put pitch and stuff on them, and hang them up on posts and light them on fire so that he could use them as lamps to light the imperial gardens that he had.

There were a lot of Christians that were sewn up into animal skins and thrown out to dogs so that the dogs could rip them alive, tear them up.

[9 : 03] So when he talks about concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, I think there might be some alluding to the fires that the Jews had to go through, or not the Jews, the Christians went through during that time.

He says, don't think it is a strange thing that's happened to you. You know, I'm going to go back and forth between the actual suffering from persecution to just regular suffering.

There's suffering all the time in our world. It's not unusual for us to suffer for a number of things.

You know, cancer or besides health issues, there's relationship issues where people suffer.

You know, we end up, suffering is so common in our world, it makes us begin to avoid it at all costs. We all avoid suffering, right? Who wants to suffer? So we avoid it at all costs, but suffering in our personal lives causes us to begin to question God. You know, God, we ask the question, you know, why?

[10 : 24] Why are you allowing this to happen to me? Or God, where are you? Why aren't you doing something about this? And Philip Yancey wrote a book called Where is God When It Hurts?

And we ask that, God, where are you? Why aren't you doing something? In chapter one of that book, he covers the, you know, we interviewed a lot of people and most people will agree that God created a good world, but he made one mistake.

And the mistake of pain. Pain and suffering. Why did he create that? Why did he have that? So we see then that good things happen to bad people.

My wife loves to watch like cold case files and stuff on TV. Solving these murder mysteries from years ago.

And it never, it almost never fails. They'll interview people and say, you know, well, we lived in this little town out in Indiana. Nobody ever locked their doors.

[11 : 40] We left the keys in the car. We, the kids were able to play out real late at night. Nobody had any concerns about where they were.

Because things like that just don't happen here. Doesn't happen. So that's what we start thinking. This doesn't happen to me. There was a, remember on 9-11, the Reader's Digest put out a story about the untold, it's the untold story of September 11th, 2001, Flight 93.

Remember that, that flight was the one that, that crashed in Pennsylvania. The hijackers were on there that caused that plane, the people caused that plane to crash in Pennsylvania instead of going and hitting another target.

But in that story, in Reader's Digest, it talks about a man who was able to call his wife from the plane. And the conversation was, the plane has been hijacked.

There are three men. They say they have a bomb. They've already killed one passenger. Please call the authorities. And in that story, the wife was saying, the only thing she should say was like, no.

[13 : 02] No, this can't be happening to us. We have good jobs. We have great children. We have a great life. Things like this just don't happen to us.

How can that be? Suffering. It happens to all of us. We all have to live through it. Philip Yancey has written another book called, *Why?*

The question that never goes away. It's why God are you allowing us? So, in this first verse, Paul was saying, not Paul, Peter, was saying, thinking not strange in the King James or in the NIV.

It says, don't be surprised. So, that's one of the don'ts when it comes to suffering. Don't be surprised when it comes. You know, Jesus has told us in John, He said, in the world you're going to have persecution.

He said, they hated me and they're going to hate you. So, you're going to be persecuted. Don't think it's strange that you're going to be persecuted.

[14 : 18] Because, actually, the Bible verse, I'm sorry, I should have written it down enough, where it talks about the reason Cain killed Abel.

It's because Cain's deeds were evil and Abel's were righteous. The world is evil and the world hates righteousness.

And the world is going to persecute righteousness. So, don't be surprised by the suffering.

Because, well, one thing is, why should we expect better treatment than what the world gave Jesus?

They persecuted Him and they crucified Him. Are we any better? So, let's look at the next verses.

It says, But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

[15 : 28] If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you on their part. And He is evil spoken of on your part.

On your part, He is glorified. I'm sorry, I didn't read that very well. What He's saying here is rejoice.

He's telling these people who are being hoisted up on poles and burned alive to rejoice over that.

And can you imagine? What? You're telling me to rejoice over that? What He's saying is, just like they treated Christ, you should feel worthy or honored to suffer for His name.

We see it in today's time too. Missionaries are persecuted and killed just because they're Christian.

Back in the Roman world, there was a guy Polycarp. He was a bishop or something. And they wanted him to denounce Christ or be burned. They had him set up, ready to be burned.

[16 : 44] And they told him, denounce Christ. And say, away with these atheists, pointing at the Christians that they had ready to kill.

Away with these atheists. They called them atheists because Caesar was God. If they didn't believe in Caesar, then they were atheists. And Polycarp says, for 80 and 6 years, I have served him.

And he's never done me any harm. And then he pointed over to the Romans that were watching.

He said, away with these atheists. And they set him on fire and burned him alive.

So, we also see that the disciples, a lot of times the disciples were scourged and beaten. And they go away singing and rejoicing.

To feeling honor to have been worthy to suffer for Christ. That's what he's talking about when he's saying rejoice. When you're suffering because of persecution, and you're suffering for the right reason, it is a place of honor.

[18 : 05] God has blessed you in allowing you to suffer for him. Next verse says, But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

So, here's another one. Don't suffer because, well, you deserve to suffer. Because you did something wrong. Look, it's funny here when you look at this.

The murderer, the thief, the evildoer, the busybody. That's interesting because, I guess, because busybodies do, a lot of times, do just as much harm in a congregation or something that these other people do.

It says, don't meddle in other people's business. But, so, you shouldn't be surprised of suffering. And really, in the first verse, as I was going to say, don't be scared of suffering because it's an honor to suffer, to be persecuted for Jesus.

And here is, do suffer for the right reasons. If you're going to suffer, suffer because you're doing right instead of being a murderer, or a thief, or a busybody.

[19 : 32] Let's look at the next verse. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on his behalf.

Again, do suffer for the right reasons because you are a Christian and because you're doing right. And it says, for the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

And if it first begin at us, what shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

So, now was the time for judgment. Jesus was purifying his church. Let's talk a little bit about the benefits of suffering.

Number one, it purifies us. Chapter 1 of 1 Peter, verses 6 and 7 says, And all this greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

[20 : 47] These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

So God, as a goldsmith, is purifying the church through suffering. This is a goldsmith is pouring the liquid gold back and forth, scraping off the impurities.

Suffering purifies the believer. It also humbles us. Suffering humbles us. Remember the Apostle Paul, when he, he had a, he wasn't prideful, but he had a tendency that he could be prideful.

Because, face it, the guy was amazing. Apostle Paul was amazing. But he was talking in 2 Corinthians 12 about some revelations, you know, that he had been, whether in body or out of body, he said, but he saw all of these visions and revelations that God had given him.

And he said in verse 7 of that, and he says, In other words, to keep me from being so conceited that I couldn't even stand myself, God has given me this thorn in the flesh.

[22 : 30] He's suffering from something. We don't know what it was, but it humbled him because he had this thorn. And he said, and another thing that does force is it causes us to depend on God as we're suffering.

When we're weak, we have to lean on something, right? Whether it's another person or a crutch or a cane or whatever you're weak, you have to lean on something.

And Paul said concerning this thorn in the flesh that he had in 2 Corinthians 12.8, For this thing I besought the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. So, he's having to depend on God's grace.

So, when we're suffering, if you don't lean on God, if you don't, you're just going to suffer even more. It's a funny thing about God's power.

[23 : 53] It's attracted to human weakness. The weaker we are, the weaker we allow ourselves to be, the more of God.

His power can be revealed in us. It's like His, where our power runs out, His begins. The person who thinks that they have it on their own and said, I don't need anybody, I can handle this.

That's the person that's going to fail. But the person who is willing to come up and say, God, I need help. Or even ask your brother, I need help. Then, God's power can be revealed in that.

Paul says, most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest on me.

In other words, he's embracing this thorn in the flesh that he's been begging God to remove. But because he realizes, because his attitude is, I am strong when I'm weak.

[25 : 04] And it's because of Christ. Let's look at the last verse of this. Oh, well, I'll just talk a little bit about those 17 and 18 where the judgment beginning in the house of God.

It says, if a righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Now, what he's referring to there is not that it's hard to get a person saved, but it comes with difficulty. It comes with difficulty. Remember what the Bible says about the pathway to heaven? The gate is narrow and the pathway is straight.

But it's easy to go the other way, right? It's wide, wide open. There's no, it's not a difficult, I mean, it's not an easy life. God didn't call us to an easy life, although he does say, you know, his burden is light, his yoke is easy, his burden is light.

But it's all our perspective of that. It's not that it really is easy. It's that because of God's help, because we lean on Him, then it becomes easy.

[26 : 21] Verse 19, this is it. Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the housekeeping, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful creator.

the NIV says, the NIV says, so then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good.

Look at those words again. so then, those who suffer according to God's will. There are people out there that say that it is never in God's will for anyone to suffer.

That if you are suffering, you're out of God's will. Well, this verse right here, they'd either have to tear this page out of their Bible or rethink their thoughts because God definitely said that we're going to suffer in this world.

And just because we are suffering doesn't mean we're not in His will. Now, if we're suffering, should we be examining ourselves to say, well, am I one of those murderers or thieves or evildoers or busybody?

[27 : 42] Maybe I should be suffering. So, we should always examine ourselves and see if I'm suffering for the right reason.

And it says, and continue to do good work. In other words, these people were being persecuted because they were Christians.

So, you could probably have the tendency to say, well, gee, I'm a Christian, I'm pretty bold, and I'm being persecuted.

Maybe if I just step it down a notch or two, then they'll overlook me. That's what, I think that's what he's saying. And continue to do, don't, don't have that attitude.

Don't back up because of the suffering. continue to do what's right and continue to serve the faithful creator. So, in closing, let me give a couple more thoughts here.

[28 : 45] Something I found. It says, if you woke up this morning with more health than sickness, you are better off than the six million people that will not survive this week.

if you've never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of prison, the agony of torture, the pain of starvation, you're ahead, you're ahead of the five million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without the fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you have food or food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of the people in the world.

If you have money in the bank and money in your wallet and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealth. We think a lot of times we're suffering and it's all a matter and there are suffering, I've already said there really is suffering.

[30 : 07] But it's a matter of perspective too. If you look, if only we have to do is look at the rest of the world and realize just how blessed we are.

we are Christ's ambassadors. If we suffer with Him, we are blessed but honored enough to suffer with Him.

We also should be Christ's hands and feet too. There was a cartoon there was a couple of turtles that were talking to each other and one of them said, you know what, I'm going to ask God when I see Him, why did you have so much poverty and pain and suffering out there?

And the other turtle says, well I'm scared God's going to ask me that question. Why? Why? Why? Then we can do something about all the pain and suffering and the poverty and the hunger out there.

And we should be. So, if we're busy about doing, helping others, then our pain kind of takes a back seat when we don't think about it that much.

[31 : 39] So what kind of person are you? Are you going to, are you the person that allows pain, allows past problems, allows suffering to rule your life, to ruin your life?

Or do you look past, there was something neat that I read, I wrote it down up here somewhere. I don't even know where I wrote it, but I can remember it.

Unsafe people have a presence that's controlled by their past. But Christians have a presence that's controlled by their future. So are you one that, like Paul says, forget what's behind me, fix your eyes on Christ and run with patience the race that's set before you?

or are you one that's going to look at your past and allow your past to destroy your present and even your future?

Because you're, or if you think about it, your future is your present, but it's later. Does that make sense? Anyway, don't be surprised when you suffer.

[33 : 08] Don't be afraid of suffering. Do suffer for the right reasons. Make sure that you're staying close to God and be God's hands and feet.

Be God's mouthpiece in this world. Help lower some of the poverty and some of the hunger and some of the pain around us. And keep your eyes on Christ and the prize that's ahead of us.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you so much again for your word. Lord, I stumbled through all these things and there were so many things that you had for me to say and I said of some of them, Lord, and some of them I didn't say.

Lord, I pray that what your word did go forward, Lord, that it will accomplish what it was supposed to. I know it will, Lord. That's the way you are. I pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.