**1 Peter: Trials Designed to Test Character, Pt 3**

1 Peter 4:12-19

**Context**

Suffering has very much been a part of God’s plan for His church from the beginning. We have a Savior who suffered. It would follow that those who are His representatives would likewise follow and be subject to the attacks that He initially bore. Moreover, God was glorified in the sufferings of His Son. True faith is always most clearly seen in the face of severe persecution.

* The first persecution, under Emperor Nero (54-68 AD)
* The second persecution, under Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD)
* The third persecution, under Emperor Trajan (98-117 AD)
* The fourth persecution, under Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius (162-180 AD)
* The fifth persecution, starting with Emperor Lucius Septimus Severus (193-211 AD)
* The sixth persecution, under Emperor Marcus Clodius Pupienus Maximus (164-238 AD)
* The seventh persecution, under Emperor Decius (249-251 AD)
* The eighth persecution, under Emperor Valerian (253-260 AD)
* The ninth persecution, under Aurelian (Lucius Domitius Aurelianus (270-275 AD))
* The tenth persecution, under Diocletian (284-305 AD)

Although many tried to wipe the Christian Church from the face of the earth, they failed to do so, for Christ will have His Church upon the earth until He returns.[[1]](#footnote-1)

* Constantine the Great, emperor of Rome (306-337 AD) brought respite to the Christians. “As a result of his splendid virtues, there was great peace and tranquility in the provinces he governed.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

**1 Peter 4:12-19**—Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; **13**but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. **14**If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. **15**Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; **16**but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. **17**For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **18**And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? **19**Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

There is a way to suffer well for the sake of righteousness. Here, Peter is telling us to keep the right focus.

**4 thoughts on the Power within Suffering**

1. **Do not be Surprised**

**12** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you

* Expect it
* God allows it to test us
* It purges our lives for greater holiness
1. **Keep on Rejoicing**

**13**but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. **14**If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

* Rejoice in it with exultation
* We share Christ’s sufferings
* The Spirit of God rests on us
1. **Suffer for the right things**

**15**Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; **16**but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. **17**For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **18**And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

* Do not do the wrong thing so as to suffer
* Do not be ashamed in suffering for Christ for righteous living
* Glorify God in this name
* Judgment begins with the Household of God
* If we are to be judged first, what will be the outcome for unbelievers?
1. **Entrust your Soul to God**

**19**Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

1. Those who suffer according to the will of God

This is the deduction which those who suffer are to make and to act on.[[3]](#footnote-3)

* 1. Not all will have to suffer
	2. According to “the will of God” is the determinate
		1. Suffering first on the house of God—purifying
		2. Then on the ungodly—damning[[4]](#footnote-4)
1. Entrust (paratithēmi)—to place alongside, i.e. present (food, truth); by implication, to deposit (as a trust or for protection)[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Luke 23:46**—And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Having said this, He breathed His last.

1. Faithful Creator
	1. This is the only place in the NT where this phrase is used
	2. God is the Author of everything; Designer of all that is; the One who sustains not only His material creation but achieves His purpose for it all[[6]](#footnote-6)
	3. It would make sense that the One who made is also able to sustain
2. Doing what is right
	1. God always does what is right; He defines right
	2. He never does what is not right
	3. God is faithful in Himself and to all that He says including His promises
	4. As such, believers can rest confidently that He will do what He has said

**1:3-5**—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4**to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, **5**who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**John 10:27-30**—My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; **28**and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. **29**My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. **30**I and the Father are one.”

**17:11-12, 15**—I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. **12**While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled….**15**I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

**Romans 8:35-39**—Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? **36**Just as it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” **37**But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. **38**For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39**nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Ephesians 1:13-14**—In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14**who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.

**Philippians 1:6**—For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**—Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24**Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

**2 Timothy 1:12**— For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

**Jude 24-25**—Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, **25**to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

**Conclusion**

Foxe’s Book of Martyrs gives us story after story after story of our beloved brothers and sisters in the faith who endured persecution to the point of martyrdom. The term "martyr" originates from the Greek word meaning "witness." These dear ones were witnesses for Christ—of whom the world was not worthy.

The cruelties against Christians in this persecution (4th persecution under Marcus Aurelius Antonius (162-180 AD) were so inhuman that many of those who watched them shuddered with horror, and were astonished at the courage of the sufferers. Some of the martyrs had their feet crushed in presses, and were then forced to walk over thorns, nails, sharp shells, and other pointed objects. Others were whipped until their sinews and veins were exposed. Then after suffering the most excruciating tortures that could be devised, they were killed in terrible ways. Yet few turned from Christ or begged their torturers to lessen their pains.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Polycarp after his sentence was given, the governor said to him, “reproach Christ and I will release you.” Polycarp answered, “eighty-six years I have served Him, and He never once wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me?” He was then burned at the stake without being nailed to it (only tied) as he would not flee.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Feliciatis, a well-known lady of a wealthy Roman family was a devout and pious Christian. She had sever sons who were also devout Christians. All were martyred—scourged and pressed to death with weights, 2 had their brains dashed out with a club, one thrown from a precipice, 3 beheaded. And after witnessing all it, she too was beheaded with the same sword.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Many were tortured almost exceed the powers of description:

* Red hot plates of brass placed upon the tenderers parts of the body and left until they burned through to the bones.
* Suspended on a piece of wood stuck in the ground, exposed as food for wild lions.
* (Blandina) Torn by lions, scourged, put into a net and tossed about by a wild bull, and placed naked into a red-hot metal chair then killed by a sword.
* Torn by wild beasts (lions, leopards, bulls, etc.) for the enjoyment of the crowd on pagan holidays.
* So many were killed that at times they buried them fifty and sixty together in large pits
* Beheaded and their heads displayed on the city gates
* Tied to wild horses and dragged along the ground until dead
* Put into a leather bad with several snakes and scorpions, and then thrown into the sea
* Nails driven through the feet, dragged through the streets, town with iron hooks, scorched with torches
* Laid naked upon live coals mixed with broken glass
* A young man, Peter, who was known for the superior qualities of his mind and body refused to sacrifice to the goddess Venus when told to do so. In his defense, he said, “I’m amazed that you sacrifice to an infamous woman whose debaucheries your own writings record, and whose life consisted of such perverted actions as your laws would punish. No, I shall offer the true God the acceptable sacrifice of praises and prayers.” He was stretched upon a wheel until all his bones were broken and then beheaded.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Hebrews 11:13-16**—All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. **14**For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. **15**And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. **16**But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. …

**Hebrews 11:32-40**—And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, **33**who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, **34**quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35**Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; **36**and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. **37**They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated **38**(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. **39**And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40**because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

The Lord has not promised us exemption from crushing disappointments, pain, bereavement, or persecution. Any one or all of them could come. If they do, don’t be surprised or perplexed. Accept them as part of Christianity, and call upon God’s strength to endure.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Psalm 31:1-5**—In You, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness deliver me.
**2**Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;
Be to me a rock of strength,
A stronghold to save me.
**3**For You are my rock and my fortress;
For Your name’s sake You will lead me and guide me.
**4**You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, For You are my strength.
**5**Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.

**Source**

Most of the message and notes come from:

Richard W. DeHaan, Good News for Bad Times: 1 Peter

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude

John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Peter

John MacArthur, The Fiery Trial, Part 2, 1 Peter 4:15-19, Jan 28, 1990, gty.org

Jerome H Smith, The New Treasure of Scripture Knowledge

Alan M. Stibbs, The First Epistle General of Peter (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries)

John Foxe, The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

1. Foxe, 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lenski, 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Strong’s G3908 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. MacArthur, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Foxe, 15-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. DeHaan, 123-124. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)