

Trust God and carry on: 1 Peter 4.12-19

Many thanks to Anna for wrestling with today's TFTD!



This passage is about suffering. It is hard to write about suffering because we have all seen a lot of suffering recently because of COVID- but this passage isn't about that kind of suffering.

It is about suffering for our faith in Jesus. It is hard to write about suffering for faith in Jesus because we have all seen places around the world where people are suffering huge amounts of persecution for their faith and we aren't suffering like them.

It is also hard to write about suffering for faith because though we are blessed not to have systematic persecution for our faith in this country, people suffer for their faith in different ways.

Whether we have experienced suffering, are experiencing it now or may in

the future, suffering for faith is part and parcel of the Christian life. Peter's advice in this passage is for everyone.

- **12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.**

Peter begins this section with: Do not be surprised at your suffering! Don't be surprised because they persecuted the prophets before you! And don't be surprised because they persecuted Jesus! And don't be surprised because following Jesus is about trying to live like he did and that will probably end with similar consequences. (They say madness is doing the same thing twice and expecting different consequences, maybe madness is also trying to live like Jesus and not expecting the same consequences- hence Peter saying don't be surprised).

- **13 But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed.**

He then goes on to paraphrase Jesus:

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt 5:11-12)

Reiterating the promise that suffering for the Kingdom now will be rewarded later.

- **14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. But also saying that you are blessed because being able to look so much like Christ that people are persecuting you like Christ can only be managed and endured with the help of the Holy Spirit.**

Suffering is rubbish! No one likes suffering, no one in their right minds would invite suffering into their lives. However sometimes suffering is endured for something that is worth it.

Women go through childbirth because a child is worth it.

People go through painful medical procedures because the cure is worth

it.

Studying for exams is worth being able to do the job you always wanted.
Supporting someone in trouble because of your friendship is worth it.
So many examples.

What Peter is saying is suffering for faith in Jesus is worth it.

but

- 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief-maker.

Not all suffering is equal. Not all suffering is because we are believers. Sometimes we can think we are following Jesus but our behaviour is not like Jesus - and we can think our suffering is because of our faith but it is just because of our bad behaviour.

Jesus never belittled someone because they didn't believe him. Jesus never bullied or shouted, or hurt or manipulated others to believe in him. For Jesus the end didn't justify the means — loving people meant letting them choose, even to the point of persecuting him and killing him. We can suffer because of our un-Christ-like behaviour even when trying to serve Christ. Peter is saying that behaviour like that doesn't count as suffering like Christ.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:38-42 "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also..." Peter puts a slightly different spin on Jesus' words saying If someone is persecuting you for your faith don't retaliate, because it will just make it worse as then you have to suffer for the crime you committed as well as the persecution because of your faith and again that behaviour doesn't count as suffering like Christ.

- 16 Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name.

But if you can manage to suffer like Christ, even if it means losing all worldly standing don't be ashamed of it.

- *17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?”*

Suffering for faith is hard, but part of the struggle builds up our faith to make it stronger. Building up resilience is important *because* living for Christ is hard but Peter points out that it will be even harder for those who haven't built up the resilience at the time of their judgement.

- *19 Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.*

So the conclusion- anyone who is suffering because of their faith - even though it is hard- the only thing to do is to trust God and carry on.

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