

1 Peter 4:12-19

Week 7 - Christianity Isn't Easy Street

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¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For 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?

¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

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

? In 64 a.d., Emperor Nero covered Christians in tar, lit them on fire, and used them as evening lights for parties. Here Peter tells his Christian readers to "not be surprised at the fiery ordeal." Why do you think Peter tells early Christians not to be surprised at their own suffering?

? In our culture, we don't have to fear being nailed to a cross. However, the crucifixion wasn't the only ordeal Christ faced. What were some of the other ways Christ suffered?

? How have you (or someone you know) suffered for following Christ?

? How should knowing that we will suffer for Christ affect how we react to that suffering?

? Amid suffering, what are some practical actions we can take that will give us peace and encourage us to rejoice?

? Verses 15-16 of this passage highlight a contrast between suffering because of the consequences of our sin and suffering because we follow Christ. What is the difference between these two types of suffering?

? What do you think Peter means when he says we bear God's name in the midst of our suffering?

? Why do you think this specific section was placed in a letter about anticipating suffering?

? In verse 19, what does Peter mean when he says we may "suffer according to God's will"?

? What is a good way to respond to Christian suffering in prayer?

God's Will And Grace

God's will exists both in His sovereign plan and in His Word, the Bible (Isaiah 46:9-10, 1 Thess. 5:11-18, Hebrews 13:20-21). Peter shares that God's plan may include suffering for Christians. As hard as this may be, Christians should be encouraged (v. 16), knowing that their suffering is in accordance with God's will or plan (v. 19). There are multiple examples in Scripture of suffering for doing good (Jesus' death on the cross, Paul's persecution through beatings/imprisonment, Stephen being stoned, etc.).

? How might that kind of prayer be different than your current prayer life? i.e. "Let me have a good day vs. Let God's glory be revealed, no matter the cost to my comfort."

For Discussion and Accountability

? Knowing you will likely suffer for Christ at some point, how can you better prepare for that?

? What can you do this week to help others who are suffering for Christ?