

PREPARED TO LIVE IN VICTORY: IS IT NORMAL FOR CHRISTIANS TO SUFFER?

Houses of Light Church • December 3-4, 2022 • Pastor Netz Gómez

1 Pet. 4:12-13

"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. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."

I. IS IT NORMAL FOR CHRISTIANS TO SUFFER?

- A. This passage will answer the questions How normal is suffering or persecution for Christians and how should we respond to that normality?
- B. **"Beloved"** Peter begins this section with this word because most likely he wants to lighten the severity of what he is going to tell them. It is as if he were saying to them: 'I speak to you truthfully because I love you, not because I am pessimistic or negative.' In chapter two he used the same endearing word when he spoke to them about the war that was going on against his soul..

1 Pet. 2:11 *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul."*

- C. This word **"beloved"** is a demonstration of affection that acknowledges how difficult it can be for someone to take a hard word, such as the fact that they are going to be persecuted or tested. **Peter does not have an emotional indifference.** This teaches us that when we say things that are difficult to receive, we must always affirm our love for the other from the beginning, this allows them to have a better response.
- D. **"do not be surprised"** You must know that suffering [persecution or trial] is going to come, it is normal; When you know it, you are no longer surprised and you can act with more sobriety. The teaching of the biblical doctrine of suffering leads us not to be surprised and therefore to respond better.

Jn. 16:4a *"But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you..."*

- E. **"the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you"** Throughout all of Scripture, different tests are a normal part of the Christian life, Peter himself mentions it at the beginning of the letter.

1 Pet. 1:6-7 *"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

- F. Various tests come like fire to believers and what is being tested is our faith; We know this because in the following verses he speaks of persecution, although trials can also include other kinds of suffering.

1 Pet. 4:14 y 16 *"If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.... 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name."*

- G. **What is examined is the genuineness of our faith.** What can fail or pass the test is faith. During a test you can say to God: 'I'm getting tired of trusting You, this is not worth it, you put me to the test and I don't like it, I thought that being Your son, I was going to have a better life, so I'm out.' That would be failing the test. To pass the test would be to say: 'Oh God I know there is no other place I can go, I turn to You and trust You in this fiery test.' Then your faith comes out like gold purified of all dross.

- H. Tests to test your faith should not be taken **"as if something strange were happening to you."** It is what Christians are experiencing all over the world. It's not that it's happening only to you; these things have happened in every generation all over the world.

1 Pet 5:9 *"Resist him [the devil], firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."*

1 Cor. 10:13 *"No temptation [trial] has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted [tested] beyond your ability, but with the temptation [trial] he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."*

- I. It is normal to be tested by fire so don't lose your stability when the test comes.

1 Thes. 3:3 *"that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this."*

Jn. 15:20a *"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you..."*

- J. Another way of understanding this reality is that persecution by those who do not know Jesus is not strange, but rather that you have become a stranger to the world and that causes them to reject you and even insult you.

1 Ped. 4:4 *"With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you."*

II. REJOICING IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERINGS FOR THE GLORY TO COME.

1 Pet. 4:13 *"But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."*

- A. **"But"** The opposite of not being surprised by the evidence is not being fatalistic or cynical: *'I already knew it was going to go wrong; this is what happens to Christians...'* The opposite of being surprised by the trial is rejoicing in sharing the suffering of Christ knowing that great joy is coming from the revelation of His glory. Christianity involves suffering now and glory later. This is something that Peter clearly affirms:

1 Ped. 5:1 *"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed."*

- B. It is not unusual in the Scriptures to consider these two stages: the sufferings of Christ that we share and His glory that will be revealed which will bring us great joy.

1 Ped. 1:11 *"inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories."*

- C. Peter focuses on how Christianity moves toward its consummation through the sufferings of Christ and toward the revelation of His glory. We share these two stages, the suffering and the joy of the glory to come. **We must not be confused, that if we do not get all the glory here we are going to leave.** We have to be patient because we know that glory is coming, just as Jesus was patient when he suffered and was able to experience the exaltation that God gave him over everything (Phil. 2: 6-11).

- D. The purpose of rejoicing in suffering is in order to rejoice when the glory of it is revealed. We must do everything we can to have our hearts changed by the power of the Holy Spirit whose fruit is to rejoice in the midst of suffering so that we are not excluded from the joy of the end of the age when He comes.

1 Pet. 3:9 *"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."*

- E. So we rejoice to have this reward in heaven but also because we already have it.

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

- F. Rejoicing now in the sufferings of Christ shows that your treasure is Christ not the world and also shows that you were born again therefore your reward is sure and the Father keeps you so you don't miss it.

1 Ped. 1:3-6 *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven*

for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials."

III. REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does Peter teach us that we should speak when a word can be difficult for someone with whom we are in dialogue to assimilate?
2. Why should we not be surprised at the tests we pass?
3. What is being examined during the tests? Explain
4. Why can Christians rejoice in the midst of suffering?

THIS WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Special Christmas service Saturday, December 24 at 6:00 p.m. On Sunday the 25th we will have a single service at 11:00 a.m.
2. On Saturday December 31st there will be no service and on Sunday January 1 we will only have a service at 11:00 a.m.
3. There is an open invitation to go to pray and minister at a Rehabilitation Center for the elderly and sick one Sunday a month. If you are interested please register at the table outside after the service..