

1 Peter 4:12-19

**Don't Be Surprised When You are
Persecuted Because of Your Faith**

Introduction

In 1 Peter 3:13-22, Peter explained what a Christian is to do, and how a Christian should act, when being persecuted because you have chosen to live your life according to the Biblical pattern given us by God.

Peter teaches us to follow the example of Jesus who was persecuted for doing right (that is, obeying Scripture with the right attitude).

Let's review 1 Peter 3:13-22

1 Peter 3:13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

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¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

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In our passage for today, we are told 6 truths.

- **We are not to be taken by surprise when persecution occurs. (4:12)**

1 Peter 4:12 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.

- If it happens, it only happens because God has allowed it and has designed it for the believer's testing, purging, and cleansing. (Rom. 8:28-29)

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- Perhaps they expected life to be full of blessing, benefits, and divine protection.
- Every Christian who lives a godly life experiences a certain amount of persecution.
- We need to remember the words of Jesus, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.” (John 15:18).

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- We need to remember the words of Paul, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Tim. 3:12).
- We need to remember the words of the Apostle John, “Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.” (1 John 3:13)

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- **We are to actively rejoice in the midst of persecution. (4:13-14)**

¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

- A Christian who is persecuted for righteousness in this life will have overflowing joy in the future.

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- Jesus promised that those who share His sufferings will also share His glory.
- The fiery and painful process of suffering for righteousness, proves the faith of a Christian, it also refines them, and it earns for them “an eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

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- Let's remember what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:5-7:

“⁵ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

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- **We must be sure that we are not being persecuted because of our own wrong doing (4:15)**

¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

- A “meddler” – it can also be translated as “mischief-maker” (RSV, also NRSV), “busybody” (KJV, NKJV), “troublesome meddler” (NASB).

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- Christians are never to be troublemakers or agitators in society or in their places of work (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1–3; Titus 3:1–5).
- They may confront the sins in the lives of other believers, help administer church discipline, challenge unbelievers with the gospel, and exhort fellow saints to greater levels of godliness.

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- But regarding others' private matters that do not concern them, believers should never intrude inappropriately.
- A “meddler” could also include civil agitation—disruptive or illegal activity that interferes with the smooth functioning of society and government.

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- **We are not to feel ashamed of our persecution.**
(4:16)
¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.
• To glorify God, in this context, means to praise Him for the privilege and honor of suffering for this name, because of all He has done, is doing, and will forever do for His saints.

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- **Everyone will undergo a careful scrutiny by God and only the righteous will be saved. (4:17-18)**

¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

¹⁸ And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

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There are several questions we should ask ourselves as we examine our own lives.

- *If I am suffering, why am I suffering?*
- *Am I ashamed, or glorifying Christ?*
- *Am I seeking to win the lost?*
- Note the words that Peter used to describe the lost:
“Them that obey not the Gospel ... the ungodly and the sinner.”

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- The warning of this verse is clear: If God sends a “fiery trial” to His own children, and they are saved “with difficulty,” what will happen to lost sinners when God’s fiery judgment falls?
- Our present “fiery trial” is nothing compared with the “flaming fire” that shall punish the lost when Jesus returns in judgment (2 Thes. 1:7–10).

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- As Christians, we do not seek for vengeance on those who have hurt us. Rather, we pray for them and seek to lead them to Jesus Christ.

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- **We are to trust in God's wisdom and sovereignty during our suffering. (4:19)**

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

- When we respond to suffering “according to God’s will,” we can count on God to help us and keep us.

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- Paul suffered persecution for his faith and reminds us in 2 Timothy 1:12:

“¹² For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

- “Committing” our life to God is not just a single action, but a constant attitude!

Summary

- We are not to be taken by surprise when persecution occurs. (4:12)
- We are to actively rejoice in the midst of persecution. (4:13-14)
- We must be sure that we are not being persecuted because of our own wrong doing (4:15)
- We are not to feel ashamed of our persecution. (4:16)

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