

# STUDY YOUR SUFFERING

## 1 Peter 4:14-16

### INTRODUCTION

- “Why do bad things happen to good people?” is an age old question pondered by multitudes of people
- But the question is somewhat pointless, as this has only happened once in the history of the universe and in that case, he volunteered
- But the real question is, “Why is there evil and suffering in the world?”
- For the atheist, there is no such thing evil as there is no morality, and the suffering and struggle of “natural selection” is the means by which we evolve into higher life forms, so we are indebted to suffering for our very existence
- But the truth is that suffering is the result of the curse which came upon the creation due to man’s sin
- But even though God is not responsible for bringing suffering and death into the world, God has in his mercy made a way for us, and the whole creation, to be redeemed from sin, suffering and death, and he had done this through the Lord Jesus Christ
- Now the particular suffering being dealt with here in 1 Peter 4 is persecution at the hands of men for being a Christian
- We saw last week that such persecution is not strange, it is to be expected, that it is a cause of joy because we partake of Christ’s sufferings, and because the fiery trial refines us, it brings to the surface those hidden evils that remain in us that we might be purged of them and purified
- The question Peter wants us to consider here is, “Why are they treating you like this?” then having answered this, respond in patient endurance and joyful worship

### I. PONDER THE REASON OF YOUR TRIAL

A. The right cause to suffer for

1. For the name of Christ (v.14)
  - a. This is to be called by the name of Jesus Christ, as believing in him and professing him as Lord
  - b. The great distinction of the believer is not merely that he lives a clean life, or that he is pious and religious, or that he is involved with the church, but that he bears the name of Jesus Christ before the world
  - c. Christ commended the church at Pergamos because they held fast his name (Revelation 2:13) and the church at Philadelphia “hast not denied my name” (Revelation 3:8)
  - d. The church’s commission is “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 24:47)

- e. Like Paul, we are to “bear my [Christ’s] name before the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15)
  - f. To be persecuted for the name of Christ is to be persecuted “for his sake” (Matthew 5:11)
2. As a Christian (v.16)
- a. The term “Christian” is used only used three times in New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28)
  - b. The followers of Christ referred to themselves variously as disciples, brethren, the faithful, saints, believers
  - c. The Greeks / Romans created this name as a term of reproach (and to distinguish them from the Jews), yet this name eventually was gladly adopted by the saints who bore Christ’s name
- B. The wrong cause to suffer for
1. Peter warns the saints to ensure that their suffering is not as a result of their evil or criminal activity (cf. 1 Peter 2:20)
    - a. We can bring trouble upon ourselves through our sin and suffer the just punishment of the civil authorities that God has ordained to punish the evil and praise the good (Romans 13:1-4)
    - b. Note that Peter implies it is possible for a believer, though called unto holiness, to fall into even serious and public sins (James 3:2; 1 John 1:8)
    - c. On such occasions it is a mar on the testimony of the sinning Christian, giving occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, and robs the believer of God’s blessing and comfort
  2. Murderers, thieves, evildoers – Christians had been saved out of sinful lifestyles, and the temptation remained of going back into those evil ways (Ephesians 4:28)
  3. The term “busybody” (*allotriepiscopos*) is only used this one time in the New Testament
    - a. It is literally one who oversees and meddles others’ affairs (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:11; 1 Timothy 5:13)
    - b. There may be a particular reference to those who meddle in political affairs as revolutionaries or insurrectionists (cf. 1 Peter 2:13-15)
    - c. Social media has allowed busybodies to flourish
  4. Peter himself had nearly found himself being punished for doing wrong when he smote the ear off the high priest’s servant, which might have been regarded as attempted murder (Matthew 26:51)

## II. PERSEVERE THE REPROACH OF THE TORMENTERS

- A. They reproach

A. Christ was reproached

1. Note that the “if” (v.14) does indicate any doubt, but certainty, in the sense of “since”
2. “Reproach” (*oneidizo*) – to defame, chide, taunt, cast in teeth, revile, upbraid; it is verbal abuse, including public ridicule (Romans 15:3)
3. The unbelievers of the Roman Empire reviled the Christians, attributing to them many baseless crimes
4. While believers were being persecuted physically by the wicked, the main focus of the apostle is on their *verbal* attacks upon the saints (cf. Psalm 55:21; 57:4; 64:3-5; 109:2-3)

B. They blaspheme

1. The phrase at the end of v.14 is omitted from modern Bible versions
2. “Evil spoken of” (*blasphemeo*) – they blaspheme God (the Spirit) when they blaspheme the Christian
  - a. “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?” (James 2:7)
  - b. To reproach the believer for his godly life is to blaspheme the God who works this godliness in the life of the believer
  - c. When their accusations prove to be false, this works for good, both in the believer’s life and in the lives of the false accusers (1 Peter 3:16)

### III. PRAISE THE REDEEMER IN TRIBULATION

A. Happy are ye

1. Happy (makarios) = blessed (cf. 3:14; Matthew 5:10-12)

B. The Spirit rests upon you

1. “For” in v.14 indicates that this is a cause of rejoicing in trials
2. The “spirit of glory” is a reference to the glory of God that dwelt in the tabernacle and temple as a manifestation of the presence of God (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11)
3. While every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9), there is a special ministry of the Spirit given to those who suffer for Christ (Romans 8:9)
  - a. He gives utterance to testify the truth under trial (Matthew 10:19-20)
  - b. He gives boldness in the face of threats of torture and death
  - c. He gives strength to endure all the attacks of the enemy
4. Stephen was martyred with the Holy Spirit gloriously ministering upon him (Acts 6:15; 7:55-60)

C. Be not ashamed

1. Shame is a product of the fall (Genesis 2:25)
2. God gave us consciences that we would be ashamed when we sin, yet “the unjust knoweth no shame” (Zephaniah 3:5)
3. Satan has perverted shame to his own wicked ends by tempting the righteous to be ashamed of Christ and godliness rather than sin
4. It is in our fleshly nature to feel shame when mocked or ridiculed by others
5. Even Peter denied his Lord in his trying hour, ashamed to own him (Matthew 26:69-75)
6. But God has “not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Timothy 1:7-8)
3. Those who are ashamed of Christ in this world, of them Christ will be ashamed at his coming (Mark 8:38)

### C. Glorify God

1. We glorify God by taking a stand for Jesus Christ in our actions and words, even in spite of the world’s hatred
2. We give glory to God in praising him for counting us worthy to bear his name, to follow the example of Christ and suffer for his sake
3. We glorify God in that his power rests upon us in such a profound manner when we are persecuted for Christ
4. We glorify God in being reviled, persecuted and killed for being a Christian (John 21:19)

## CONCLUSION

1. As believers we ought to do everything in our power to “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18; 1 Timothy 2:2)
2. Nevertheless, the world is under Satan’s sway, and hates Christ and those who follow him, and will bring persecution on us
3. None of us are any match for Satan, and were it up to us in our own strength to face him, not of us would stand
4. But “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4)
5. We are all guilty of feeling shame before the world for our faith
6. What an indictment to be ashamed of Christ who is not ashamed to call us brethren (Hebrews 2:11)
7. May we repent of this heinous sin, and by God’s grace never be ashamed of the name of Christ, regardless of the world’s fiercest persecution