

FBC POWELL, 7-14-19 AM NOTES

“Facts About Fiery Ordeals”

1 Peter 4:12-19

17 in Series, “Standing Firm in the True Grace of God”

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB) ⁶ “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 2:19-20 (NASB) ¹⁹ “For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.”

1 Peter 3:14 (NASB) “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.”

1 Peter 3:17 (NASB) “For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”

1 Peter 4:1 (NASB) “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”

1 Peter 5:10 (NASB) “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.”

“They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls.”

—Charles Spurgeon

I. The Realms of Suffering (v. 12)

“Suffering is not a surprise, but a plan.”

—John Piper

A. The Realm of Common Suffering

Job 14:1 (NASB) “Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil.”

B. The Realm of Carnal Suffering

Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB) ¹⁹ “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who **practice** such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Hebrews 12:6 (NASB) “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

C. The Realm of Christian Suffering

1 Peter 4:16a (NASB) “But if *anyone suffers* as a Christian...”

2 Timothy 3:12 (NASB) “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Hebrews 12:6 (NASB) “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

II. The Results of Suffering (vv. 12-14)

A. Purification (v. 12)

Psalms 66:10 (NASB) “For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined.”

Malachi 3:3 (NASB) “He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.”

B. Identification (v. 13a)

Romans 6:6 (CSB) “For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin’s dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin”.

Romans 8:1 (NASB) “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 1:3 (NASB) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places in Christ*.”

Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV) “To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

Ephesians 1:7 (NASB) “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

Philippians 3:9 (NASB) ⁹ “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

1 Corinthians 12:13a (NASB) “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...”

Acts 22:7 (NASB) “I...heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”

C. Glorification (vv. 13b-14)

1 Peter 1:11 (NASB) “Seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”

Romans 8:17b (NASB) “...we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.”

Romans 8:18 (NASB) “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

III. The Response to Suffering (vv. 13-19)

A. We Rejoice (v. 13)

Acts 5:41 (NASB) “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.”

Hebrews 10:34 (NASB) “For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.”

James 1:12 (NASB) “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.”

B. We Review (vv. 15-18)

C. We Rely (v. 19)

Luke 23:46a (NASB) “And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’”

Ephesians 3:20 (NIV) “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

Sermon 17: Facts about Fiery Ordeals

1 Peter 4:12-19

Suffering is a recurring theme in 1 Peter. That makes sense when you think about the fact that the symbol of Christianity is a cross, not a pillow. I think it would be worth our time to review some of the passages in this book that focus on pain and suffering.

1 Peter 1:6-7: “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 2:19-20: “For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.”

1 Peter 3:14: “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.”

1 Peter 3:17: “For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”

1 Peter 4:1: “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”

The summary verse is 1 Peter 5:10: “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.”

In verse 12, Peter calls these trials “...the fiery ordeal among you...” Because there is so much error that is influencing so many Christians, we must have a firm grasp about what God’s word says about “fiery ordeals” or suffering. One of the most dangerous errors that is gaining lots of deceived followers is what is often called the “Prosperity Gospel.” In reality, the Prosperity Gospel is a false “Gospel” propagating hellish lies. Tim Challies has a clear word to say about this heresy:

It is beyond dispute that the prosperity gospel has swept over the world to such a degree that a significant portion of those who call themselves Christians—whether at home or abroad—hold to a version of Christianity that bears little resemblance to “the faith once for all delivered to the saints”. It is beyond dispute that this gospel promises prosperity to the many while delivering it to only a few.

I would add that “the few” are the teachers of this heresy. Challies goes on to say, “Over the past few years I’ve had the opportunity to travel to many different countries across every continent and, wherever I’ve gone, I’ve asked pastors to tell me about the foremost challenges to the gospel in their contexts. Almost to a man they’ve had far less to say about government restrictions or rival religions than false gospels—especially the false gospel of prosperity.”

My experience (especially in several countries in Africa) is exactly what Challies points out. The real danger in this false gospel is that it teaches that trials, suffering, and tough times are not in the will of God, while the scriptures say clearly that trials, suffering, and tough times become God’s tools for our sanctification (conformity to the likeness of Christ). In this message we will see why God allows trials or “fiery ordeals”. We see this in 1 Peter 4:13: “but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.” Satan, the enemy of our souls, is a convincing liar. One of his primary lies is that all trials are bad for us and all material prosperity is good for us.

What we are going to see in this passage is that the trials we dread, the trials we run from are one of the primary means that God has chosen to bless us, mature us, and draw us close to him. Charles Spurgeon said it well: “They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls.”

Let's examine the facts about fiery trials.

I. The Realms of Suffering (v. 12)

We should not be shocked about suffering! John Piper said, "Suffering is not a surprise, but a plan." For Christians, there are three realms, three categories, three types of suffering.

A. The Realm of Common Suffering

In 1 Peter 4:12 we see the phrases "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal" and speaking of the testing from trials, "as though some strange thing were happening to you." That word "strange" could be translated "a surprising thing." As a part of living in a sin cursed world, painful trials come to us all. Job 14:1: "Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil." I think that verse includes all of us! We all receive heartbreaking news; we all have been hurt by someone we thought was a friend; we have all been rejected in some way; we have all suffered with sickness, had lies told about us, and turned down for the job we so desperately wanted. That's just a few of the examples of suffering in this sin cursed world.

B. The Realm Carnal Suffering

"Carnal" means flesh. Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who *practice such things* will not inherit the kingdom of God."

As Christians, these are not to be the norm in our life (saved people don't "practice" these sins, but we can slip into them and that brings suffering). When we abuse our bodies, there are physical consequences. When don't control our tongue, we may lose dear friends; when we are lazy or careless, we may lose our job. That is what I mean as carnal suffering. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:6: "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." When as God's child, we walk after the flesh, He disciplines us and that involves suffering.

C. The Realm of Christian Suffering

This is the realm of suffering that I want to focus on. Peter begins verse 12 with the word "Beloved." That word is referring to God's dearly loved ones, God's children, those who are saved, those who are in union with Christ ("in Christ"). "Beloved" is a pastoral word that conveys tenderness, affection and compassion. The suffering here is not from an ingrown toenail, a sinus infection, or an upset stomach. This is suffering for the cause of Christ. 1 Peter 4:16a: "but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian..." Timothy summarized it this way in 2 Timothy 3:12: "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

The world doesn't persecute carnal "Christians". In my opinion, most of those we call carnal Christians aren't Christians at all. Carnality in Christians is not a permanent category; it is something that believers slip into and come out of because of God's painful discipline of his children. Hebrews 12:6: "For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." The world likes having professing Christians who live just like the world does.

When you are "a new creation in Christ", when your life is different from those in the world, when you seek to please God in all that you do, when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, the Devil paints a target on your back, and you will experience "fiery ordeals".

Oswald Chambers gives a good summary of what I have been sharing. "To choose to suffer means there is something wrong. To choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No

healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not." [Oswald Chambers, source unknown]

The will of God for every believer will involve to some extent, in some way, some type of fiery ordeal – some type of suffering.

II. The Results of Suffering (vv. 12-14)

In verse 12, Peter exhorts us, "...do not be surprised..." The KJV says, "think it not strange..." He is saying, "expect suffering." In fact, for a true Christian, the absence of suffering and trials is strange. Learn this: our suffering as a Christian is purposeful. What exactly is the purpose of suffering or "fiery trials"?

A. Purification (v. 12 "the fiery ordeal among you")

"Fiery ordeal" is an interesting phrase for suffering. The Greek word used here designates a particular kind of suffering. It is referring to a furnace that melts down metal to separate it from its impurities and foreign matter. We read in Psalms 66:10: "For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined." A fiery ordeal speaks of the affliction that is designed to bring about spiritual maturity. We read in Malachi 3:3: "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness."

Our trials, our suffering is designed to purify us. How does that work? Fiery trials should immediately move us into a time of examination – especially a time of examining our motives. For all of us, when things are going smooth, there is a tendency to drift and take on impure motives like taking on baggage. Like silver with impurities and foreign material mixed with it, the fire is turned up and the impurities begin to rise to the surface. Here is the application; if you are going through some real trials, some painful hurtful things, focus on cooperating with your Heavenly Father and allow Him to reveal any impurities that have infiltrated your life. In other words, allow the Lord to do His purifying work in you.

The first result of fiery trials is purification.

B. Identification (v. 13a)

When we suffer, we are never alone. We are "identified" with Christ. To put it another way, we find our true identity in our union with Christ. His suffering is ours and our suffering is His. This is not just a lot of *double talk*. This is a fundamental truth of the New Testament – our union with Christ and thus our identity in Christ. The word "share" in verse 13 is translated "participate" in the NIV. The Greek word here is the root word (*koinonia*) that we get the word "fellowship" from. It means "to have in common."

If you want to be blessed go to the Pauline epistles and look at all the uses of the little phrase "in Christ" which means "in union with Christ". From Romans, Christians are crucified with Christ. Romans 6:6 (CSB): "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin." We are no more under condemnation in Christ. Romans 8:1: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Let me just give you some examples from the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places in Christ*." Notice that the key to "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" is "in Christ".

Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV): "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Our acceptance by God is in Christ. Let me give you one or two more.

Ephesians 1:7: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” We have been redeemed, bought out of the slavery to sin because we are now in Christ – His death on the cross was our death, His resurrection is now our resurrection to new life. I will just summarize some others: We have an inheritance “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:11).

In Philippians 3:9, we have Christ’s righteousness because of our union with Christ. “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

At salvation, we were all baptized into union with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13a: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...” That is the body of Christ – we are in Christ and Christ is in us. That is our identification, our union with Christ. You may hear this and say, “I’m not worthy of that.” Well of course you are not worthy! It is all by grace – grace alone.

One of my modern-day heroes is Joseph Tson, a Baptist Pastor in Romania during the reign of an evil dictator who imprisoned him and sought to kill him. Joseph Tson said this about his union with Christ: “This union with Christ is the most beautiful subject in the Christian life. It means that I am not a lone fighter here; I am an extension of Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He [Jesus] suffered in my body. It is not my suffering. I only had the honor to share His sufferings.” [Undated paper, *A Theology of Martyrdom*]

It is interesting that when Saul (Paul) was persecuting the church and was struck down on the Damascus Road, God said to him: Acts 22:7b: “...Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *Me*?”

The Lord Jesus will never be more near or dear to you than when you go through fiery trials. Because you are in union with Him, identified with Him, in Him, He will bring you through your trials.

C. Glorification (vv. 13b-14)

Fiery Trials become a platform to glorify our Lord Jesus. In verses 13 and 14, we see a pattern. First there is suffering and then there is glory. We see that pattern in several places.

1 Peter 1:11: “seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted *the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.*”

Romans 8:17b: “...we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him.*” This explains why we can rejoice when we partake of Christ’s sufferings. We know that the glory is coming.

Romans 8:18: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Suffering with and for Christ enlarges our capacity to both glorify God and enjoy His glory. I wonder if in eternity the sufferers here will be feeling sorry for those who had it comparatively easy here? In verse 14 we are told that when we suffer for serving Christ, the Spirit of glory and God rests on us. Could it be that those who have suffered most here will have a greater capacity to enjoy Heaven where there is no more suffering?

III. The Response to Suffering (vv. 13-19)

How do we respond when we go through these fiery trials?

A. We Rejoice (v. 13)

Notice that we “keep on rejoicing.” It is amazing how many times in the New Testament that rejoicing is associated with suffering and with Christ. Here are a couple of examples: Acts 5:41: “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered

worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.” James 1:2: “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.”

In order to rejoice in the midst of fiery ordeals, we must see our suffering in light of God’s sovereignty. We realize that it is not bad luck or bad karma; it is God’s perfect plan for us.

B. We Review (vv. 15-18)

When suffering comes, we should analyze it as we review it. Is it common suffering? Is it carnal suffering? Is it Christian suffering – suffering for your stand on Scripture? If it is common suffering, we look unto the Lord for grace to endure and grow through this trial that is the result of living on a sin cursed planet. A good verse to guide these types of suffering is Romans 8:28: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” Don’t ever waste your suffering! If it is carnal suffering, we need to repent and confess our sin. If it is Christian suffering, then we seek the Lord as to how we can glorify Him by standing firm in the Scriptures no matter what the cost might be.

C. We Rely (v. 19)

What a tremendous passage. That word translated “entrust” is a banking term referring to a deposit that is kept safe. Jesus used this word when on the cross He said in Luke 23:46b: “...Father, into Your hands I *commit* My spirit.” “Entrust” is a word that means to invest something of great worth to the care and discretion of another. We look to our Lord and entrust our souls, our future to Him, knowing, believing that He can be trusted. Worry about trials and suffering fades away when we know that the one who is caring for us is the Son of God who loves us. Listen to this encouraging verse: Ephesians 3:20 (NIV): “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

Conclusion

Do you feel alone in your trials? Turn to Jesus, surrender to Him, entrust yourself to Him. He never promised that He would keep us from fiery trials; He promised that through our suffering He will be with us giving us His enabling grace to empower us and get us through the fiery ordeal. And most importantly, He will use the fiery ordeal to conform us to His likeness. Because of this, you can face trials without fear.

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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