

1 & 2 Peter Women's Bible Study
1 Peter 4:12-19
Lesson 15 Notes

Rejoice in Suffering

Vs. 12 – “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.” We can talk about rejoicing in suffering, but do we really believe it is possible? We walk through this section of scripture by faith: knowing 1 Peter 4:12-19 is God-breathed and is there to train us in righteousness (how to respond to suffering for God's honor and our comfort). Let us begin with the truth of Hebrews 11:1 “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the evidence of what is not seen.” Hebrews 11:6 reminds us, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” How can we be filled with the joy of the Lord even when we are suffering? Paul Brand, the missionary surgeon to India wrote in his book: “I have come to see that pain and pleasure come to us not as opposites but as Siamese twins, strangely joined and intertwined. Nearly all of my memories of acute happiness, in fact, involve some element of pain and struggle.” We rejoice in God, not in our circumstances. God is good. God is faithful. God is precious to our hearts. Peter's advice to suffering Christians is to not think fiery trials strange or be surprised by them. They are designed to try, not to ruin them, to try their sincerity, strength, patience and trust in God. Trials are for their ultimate good: to praise and honor Jesus as Lord. Trials are according to God's will. Suffering is not outside of the will of God. It is in God's will. This is true even when satan may be the immediate cause. God is sovereign over all things, including satan. Suffering is a plan. It is a testing. It is a purifying fire. It proves and strengthens real faith, and it consumes performance faith.

Vs. 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.” Suffering gives us an opportunity to praise God. Good circumstances offer opportunities to praise our circumstances. The more we glorify God, the more He will refresh us and deepen our experience of Him. The confidence of a genuine faith is one of our greatest blessings. We won't know that until we suffer. Sufferings burns performance works. Only what we do for Him will last and bring true joy. Ultimately suffering brings us greater joy in establishing our faith in Him.

Vs. 14 – “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” There is great help and comfort for our greatest times of suffering. God is with us; we but turn, and He is there to comfort us in all of our afflictions. There is no real comfort, but God's comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-5). There is comfort for us when we need it. The Spirit will reveal enough glory and enough of God to satisfy our souls, and carry us through.

Vs. 15 – “By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evil doer, or a troublesome meddler.” The best of men need to be warned of the worst of sins. It is not the suffering, but the object (Christ) of our faithful behavior that makes it worthy. There is little comfort when we bring suffering on ourselves.

Vs. 16 – “But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.” Our rejoicing glorifies God. It confirms our faith and joy in Him. We make it known that He is the object of our faith and true joy. He is worthy! When we rejoice in God in our suffering, the world sees that He is the source of our joy. Paul Brand – the missionary surgeon to India tells another story of his mother who was a missionary to India. He tells of the glory she brought to God, rather than to herself: for mother, pain was a frequent companion, as was sacrifice. I say it kindly and in love, but in old age, mother had little physical beauty left in her. The rugged conditions, combined with the crippling falls and her battles with typhoid, dysentery, and Malaria, had made her thin, hunched – over old woman. Years of exposure to wind and sun had toughened her facial skin into leather and furrowed it with wrinkles as deep and extensive as any I have seen on a human face. Mother knew that as well as anyone for the last 20 years of her life she refused to keep a mirror in her house. This story brings me to joyful tears. She was the mirror. She reflected Christ. He was the light and the glory.

Vs. 17 – “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” When God brings judgments on nations, he generally begins with his own people (Isa. 10:12; Jer. 25:29). That means his judgments begin with us. Divine judgment on believers is the decision God renders on someone’s sin. Divine judgment includes chastening and leads to the cleansing of the household of God, but not to eternal condemnation (Romans 8:1; 1 Cor. 11:32; Hebrews 12:11).

Vs. 19 – “Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what is right.” All of our sufferings come upon us according to the will of God. It is our duty to look more to the keeping of our souls than to the preserving of our bodies. The soul is of the greatest value. He is after our hearts. The only way to keep the soul well is to commit to God in well-doing. “He will bring to pass what He wills – only He is completely able and trustworthy in doing what is right. Who could be better than a trustworthy creator who always acts righteously? Because God is faithful in Himself and His own promises, believers’ souls are at rest in His power and purpose (Jude 24:25; John 10:27-30; 17:11-12).”

John MacArthur
John Piper
Matthew Henry
Ruth Myers
Darlene Rose

