Rejoicing in our Suffering

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[0:00] Take out your Bibles and open with me to 1 Peter chapter 4. This will be our next to last sermon in 1 Peter.! So we'll cover in a few weeks chapter 5 all in one sermon.

Lord willing, hopefully storms don't come the first week of May. But the plan is to cover chapter 5 on May 7th. So 1 Peter chapter 4 will be in verses 12 through 19 this evening.
When I was in high school, there was a hashtag that kind of took over Twitter for a little while. Twitter was still relatively new when I was in high school, when dinosaurs were around.
And there was a hashtag called First World Probs, or First World Problems. Thanks for the fake laugh. And so people would complain about difficulties in their day and say, hashtag First World Probs.
Now what is a First World Problem? This would be really like an inconvenience of luxury. So it's not quite up to your standard of what you expect living in the United States of America.
[1:12] So a Third World Problem would be, we don't have enough water to get through the summer. That's a major problem. A First World Problem is, the internet is slow, and I'm going to die because of it.

I can't find the TV remote. Now I can't watch TV. Like, my life is the worst. I can't figure out what restaurant to choose. Like, we've got so many to choose from.
Our friends are arguing, and now I hate my friends because we've got so many restaurants to choose from. I went to Wild Hero, and they burned my stinking latte. Like, what is going on? What is our country coming to?
What these reveal, these kind of frustrations we have in life, show us that we don't expect any inconveniences.
We don't expect any suffering to happen in our lives. If suffering does happen, we view it as an interruption to how our life is normally supposed to go.
[2:11] It's seen as an interruption of our normal lives. And this is a problem that doesn't just affect our world or our nation. This isn't a problem that just affects us as Americans.

This kind of worldview affects how we live the Christian life as well. We're walking with Christ, and so we don't expect to suffer. We're walking with Christ, and so anytime we do encounter suffering, we're like, okay, this is just kind of something I'm going through right now, and then it'll be over soon.
And that's not how the Bible talks about suffering as a Christian. That's not how the Bible describes our lives here in this fallen world. And actually, that kind of broken view of suffering and how life is supposed to go isn't a new problem either.
These Christians that Peter is writing to weren't living in a first world country. They weren't living a life of luxury when they would just go through the drive-through, but they did view suffering as a surprise.
They did view suffering as something that was unexpected. They viewed suffering as an interruption to how their life was supposed to go as they were following Christ.
[3:30] They started to suffer. They experienced persecution, and it kind of possibly sent them into a crisis of faith. Is God displeased with me?

Does he not hear my prayers? Is there some sin in my life that I don't know about, and that's what's causing this suffering? They didn't expect to suffer for Jesus.
So let me read 1 Peter 4, 12 through 19. 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.
But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of

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glory and of God rests upon you.
But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.
[4:43] 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? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. We'll cover this text in three points tonight.
The first one is, don't be surprised, but rejoice. Don't be surprised, but rejoice. And he begins this really new section, this concluding section of the letter by calling them beloved.
And this is how he started a new section in chapter 2, verse 11. And he's reminding them that they are loved by God. You're loved by Peter, and you are loved by God.
You're suffering intensely. You're suffering as a Christian, but you are loved ones. And he says, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you.
[5:54] Now, some people think that this reference to a fiery trial is Peter's look to the future of when Christians would burn at the stake, this kind of future view of persecution getting worse.

I think Peter's just repeating himself here. He's returning to this theme of, you are suffering. Your faith is being tested through your suffering. So if you look at chapter 1, verse 6, he says, in this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been grieved by various trials, 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.
And so this fiery trial is just a reference to the difficulties that they're going through, the trial that they are going through. And Peter says, do not be surprised by this, brothers.
Don't be surprised by this, friends, as you're trying to follow Christ and you're suffering for it. And he's used that word surprise before. We saw it last week in chapter 4, verse 4, where he says, the Gentiles are surprised that you don't join them in the same flood of debauchery.
And so these Christians have now cut off their life of sin. They've walked away from these gross sins that used to mark them, the sexual immorality, drunkenness, lawless idolatry.
[7:22] And the world is shocked that they're not joining them in sin anymore. Peter's saying, the world is shocked by your behavior, but you don't be shocked when they make you suffer for it.

They can be surprised by your new behavior in Christ, but you don't be surprised when suffering comes your way. And why does Peter say that suffering comes upon us?
He says, to test you. To test you. Ultimately, every trial we walk through, every drop of suffering we endure, comes from the hand of God.
And that may terrify you. That may scare us. That may not sit right with us. But at the end of the day, that should be incredibly comforting.
Because it's God to whom we belong. We are gods. We are his people. He has saved us. And he is good. And so if he is sending trials in our life, if he is causing us to suffer, we can know that he's got a good purpose in it.
[8:39] He's got a good purpose for us to walk through this suffering. And so in what way does it test us? Well, it tests our faith.

And if you want to write down Deuteronomy 8.2, this is how God has always acted towards his people. In Deuteronomy 8, God is recounting how the Israelites have been saved from Egypt and have now wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.
And God says that he caused them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years that he might humble them, testing them to know what was in their heart.
And so what God is saying there is that these trials, these temptations, these tests reveal what's in our heart.
It exposes what we're trusting and it exposes what's really going on in our heart. And so some of our lowest moments in life, some of the things we regret most deeply come from a time of suffering.
[9:43] We treat people poorly. We lash out in anger against other people because our lives are difficult. And that exposes what sin is in our heart that trials kind of bring out.

And so these trials test our faith. These trials expose what's going on in our hearts. And Peter says, don't be surprised by this as though something strange were happening to you.

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Don't be surprised by this. This is what we should expect as we follow Jesus. Jesus told us this would happen. He says, if the world hates me, know that the world will hate you as well.
Jesus says, just like they persecuted the prophets, they will persecute you as you proclaim my name. And 2 Timothy 3, 12 says, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
Persecution and suffering should be expected in this life following Christ. But this is such a beautiful word that Peter uses here.
[10:54] He says, as though something strange were happening to you. And I think that's how we often feel when suffering happens to us. That's how we usually feel when something tragic happens in our lives or in our city or in our families.

You hear things like, and you might even say things like, I can't believe this is actually happening. That this doesn't seem like real life.
It seems like I'm living in a dream. This doesn't seem like it can actually be happening. What we're saying is this is strange. This is not how my life is intended to go.
And Peter's saying, when suffering comes upon you, when you're tested, don't be shocked by it. Don't react as though something strange is happening to you.
When I was playing football in high school, we used to play UConn the first game of the year. And it used to be a big rivalry because UConn used to be good at football. Ah, man, we've won like eight years in a row, so it's not really a rivalry anymore, am I right?
[11:59] But it used to be the first game of the year, and it was an intense battle and heated rivalry. It would go back and forth each year. And my junior year, we were playing at UConn, and we scored a touchdown.

It was kind of late in the first quarter. If you don't know football, touchdown's good. Touchdown's good. And so people are cheering, screaming, there's a flag on the play. Gets called back.
We get pushed back, touchdown's wiped off the board. The very next play, we score again. Another flag. Gets called back, wiped off the board. And as an offense, we didn't panic.
We didn't get frustrated. We weren't yelling at the refs. Our coaches stayed calm. Our coaches weren't yelling at the refs. A few plays later, we scored no flags. So we scored like three touchdowns in about eight plays. How in the world did we stay calm?
How was it that even our coaches weren't yelling at the refs, even though the calls were ridiculous? Like five minutes before the game, one of our offensive coordinators says, something's going to go wrong tonight.
[13:10] Calls aren't going to go our way. We're going to make mistakes. Don't let it rattle. You just keep playing. And so because that was our expectation going into the game, the suffering, the bad calls didn't shock us.

And this is how Peter's trying to coach us to live the Christian life. If you go in thinking you're not going to suffer, suffering's going to shake you to your core. Suffering's going to rattle you. But if you have these proper expectations, if you know suffering is a part of life following Jesus, that'll help you in the moment of suffering.
That'll help you in the moment of trial. That doesn't mean trial's going to be easy. That doesn't mean it'll be pain-free. It does mean you'll be able to keep a proper perspective in the midst of your suffering.
It seems like these Christians were surprised by their suffering. Otherwise, Peter wouldn't have to say, don't be surprised by it. But our expectations can sometimes set us up for success in life.
And sometimes our expectations can really hinder our progress in Christ. And so what is it that you're expecting from life? What is it that you're expecting your life to entail?
[14:25] And there are a lot of churches today who do not prepare their people for suffering well at all. And do you know these kind of churches? It's Cool Church.

It's not the name of the actual church. It's the kind of church. It's cool.church.tv. And, you know, they want as many people there as possible. They want to preach kind of a light, positive, happy message so that everyone walks out the door feeling good and feeling loved and to feel good about life.
And it works. That theology, they kind of water down some of the difficult teaching. They don't want to scare anyone. And it works when you're in your teens and 20s.

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But what happens when you're in your 30s and you lose a child? What happens when your spouse is diagnosed with cancer? Do you have a theology?
Do you have a belief about God that will keep you steady through the midst of those trials? Is your church preparing you in such a way that you'll be able to endure that without losing your faith?
[15:44] And this is part of the reason why our church looks the way it does. Our church strives to teach you the truth that will help you in your darkest hour.

To preach you truths during good times so that when bad times come, you can rely on the truth of God's word. Suffering will come your way. Can your theology cope?
Can your theology deal with suffering in this life? We could change our tactics as a church. We could change our tactics as a youth ministry and get lots of people in the doors.
But if we're not giving you what you need most, which is God's word, we're being unfaithful. And so we preach the books of the Bible. We give you God's word to prepare you in part for these moments that will come in your life.
And you know you can rely on God's word because he proves reliable and a refuge to those who call out to him. And it's highly possible when suffering comes into your life, it's highly possible for you to think, I must have done something wrong.
[16:59] I'm being punished by God for my sins. I did something wrong, and so now God is paying me back for it. But for these Christians, Peter turns that kind of thinking on its head.

He says, don't be surprised by it, verse 13, but rejoice. Insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.
What does it mean to share in Christ's sufferings? Well, Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was afflicted, wrongly accused. He bore the sin of many.
He died in our place so that by looking to him through faith, we can be saved. And when we share in that suffering, we're not taking away other people's sins.
We're not sinless in our own right. But the kind of hatred that Jesus received is now falling on us. That's what it means to share in the sufferings of Christ in the life of these people Peter's writing too.
[18:04] He says, be glad when you suffer because if you share in his suffering, if you participate in his suffering, you'll share in his glory too. Our suffering as Christians prepares us for glory in God's presence.

Our suffering now strips away our love for sin, strips away our enchantment with this world, strips away our love for the things of this world, and prepares our palate to taste glory.
It's taking us somewhere. Our suffering is accomplishing something in our lives. It's not just testing us. It's preparing us to be in the presence of God.
Peter points us not to anything in this world. He points us to a future joy that far outweighs anything this life could offer us.
This glory we'll experience in God's presence is far greater than simply avoiding suffering here in this life. It's this future joy, this future perspective that will anchor our souls through the difficulty of suffering.
[19:19] And he's encouraging these people, rejoice now in your sufferings so that when Jesus appears, you can rejoice then too. If you don't share in his suffering now, if you don't follow him now and count the cost now, you won't be rejoicing when he returns.

You won't share in his glory when he reappears. We should rejoice now in our suffering. And Peter actually lived this out.
In Acts chapter 5, the apostles are beaten for proclaiming the name of Christ. In Acts 5.41 says, they went out rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.
Rejoice in suffering so that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. It's on the opposite side of this.
If we don't follow Jesus now, if we don't share in his sufferings, we won't be glad when he returns.
[20:28] And that's what his glory being revealed is a reference to, his return again in judgment. And so is the return of Christ a good thing?

It depends. If you're right with him, if you're faithful to him, his return is beautiful. His return is what you're longing for.
Seeing his face is what you've waited for your entire life. If you're disobedient to him, if you don't believe him, you couldn't possibly imagine a worse scenario.

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But if we share in his sufferings, if we follow him and his example now, we will rejoice even more greatly when his glory is revealed.
Verse 14, if you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Far from God being displeased with you in your suffering, far from God being angry with these Christians and causing them to suffer, it's a unique sign of God's blessing.
[21:37] When you suffer for Jesus, it is a blessed thing because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Suffering in life as a Christian is not necessarily a sign of God's punishment.

It's a sign of his blessing and love in a believer's life. He sends our trials to us for our good.
He sends them to us to bless us. You think, how could God send us suffering out of love?
Well, Hebrews 12 describes suffering as God's fatherly love toward us, his fatherly discipline for us.
Hebrews 12 verse 7, it is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
[22:44] Verse 11, for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

And so the author of Hebrews is calling the suffering they're going through as discipline from the father. Not necessarily because they've done something wrong, but it's his training, it's his preparation for them.
And in the moment it seems painful, but from this future perspective it leads to fruitfulness and peace and righteousness. And Peter is saying it seems painful now, but from a future perspective this is a blessing to you.
This will help you be more faithful to Christ. So don't be surprised but rejoice. Secondly, don't suffer for sin but as a Christian.
Don't suffer for sin but as a Christian. And we see this in verse 15, Peter says, but let none of you suffer as, and he goes on to list several sins, a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.
[23:54] And so Peter again is returning to this idea of like, hey, don't suffer because you've done something dumb in your life. Make sure when you suffer it's because you're following Christ. So he says, don't suffer as a murderer, someone who takes life or a thief, someone who takes things, someone who takes stuff or an evildoer.

This is someone who just does bad things in general, someone who just likes to do hood rat stuff for fun. And Peter knew how easily people could justify their suffering and say it's because they're Christians.
And you may have some friends like this at school, they're bad students, none of you in here of course but you're friends, they're bad students and a teacher kind of doesn't really like them and they're like, you know, I heard she doesn't like Christians.
I think it's because I'm a Christian that she doesn't like me. It's like, no, because you haven't done any of your work this semester. Like, don't just do foolish things and blame it on Christ. Peter's saying, don't suffer for any of these things.
And the last thing he lists is a meddler. And a meddler is like a busy body. Peter actually just makes up this word. And if we had translated this word literally, it would just be looking over someone's shoulder.
[25:15] He's like, just stay out of other people's business. This is someone who, he's describing someone here who annoyingly inserts themselves into other people's lives or business or conversations.

And so Peter's calling them not only to avoid sins that are criminal, he's saying also as an act of love, we shouldn't be an annoyance to people.
We shouldn't, that doesn't give off the aroma of Christ. That doesn't, that isn't a good witness to the gospel. And so there are some serious sins listed here, murder, thieving, evil doing, and meddling. Doesn't seem to fit, but what Peter is saying is don't be persecuted as a criminal. Don't let people hate you because you're a frustration to them.
Verse 16, yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.
[26:20] There were some Russian Christians who were very heavily persecuted in the Soviet Union, and they resolved together as a church, if we are ever going to be persecuted by the government, we're going to make sure it's only for the gospel.

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We're not going to do anything that would cause the government to hate us or hate Christians. We're going to make sure that if they hate us, it's because we're following Christ.
It's because we're being faithful to the gospel, and that's exactly what Peter is saying here. Don't unnecessarily provoke people to hate you, but if you suffer as a Christian, if you suffer as following Christ, let him not be ashamed.
And that word Christian actually only shows up three times in the entire Bible. It's twice in Acts, and then once here in 1 Peter. It means a follower of Christ.
And the world actually made up this term to make fun of Christians in the book of Acts. That's those Christians. They're the ones that follow Christ, and it was kind of a derogatory term because they're like, Christ was crucified.
[27:31] He was utterly humiliated. You want to follow him? We'll call you Christians. And the early church brought that on and said, we love that title. We'll call ourselves Christians.

So Peter's saying, if anyone suffers as a follower of Christ, as a Christian, let him not be ashamed. And let's remember who wrote this letter.
There was a time in Peter's life when he was ashamed of Jesus. There was a time in his life where he was scared to even associate himself with Jesus.
He denied that he even knew Jesus three times. But he learned his lesson. Do not be ashamed of Christ.
If you're not ashamed of him, this world will not be able to intimidate you because there's nothing in this world that you want. This world will have no power over you if you are not ashamed of Christ.
[28:44] Now the question we need to ask is, are we ashamed of him? How would my life look different if I wasn't afraid to associate myself with Jesus?

Would there be any difference in my life? Are we ashamed of him? Peter says, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.
That's in the name of Christ, in that name called Christian. Glorify God through that title. And now Peter concludes this section and he says, 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?
The household of God is just reference to the church, reference to God's people, and Peter is saying that suffering purifies us. Suffering prepares us to see Jesus in all of his glory and if suffering, if this judgment begins with the people that God loves here and now and it's painful and it's difficult, what's going to happen to the people who are disobedient to him?
What's going to happen to those who are enemies of Christ? If God who loves us sends us through such difficult trials here and now, what does the future look like for unbelievers?
[30:12] What does it look like when he returns? It's horrible news. If you're not right with Christ, you're going to die in your sins and go to hell and when he returns, he's going to resurrect you in a new body just to condemn you under his wrath for all eternity.

That's what the future holds for unbelievers. And so if the Lord who loves us painfully purges our love for sin and painfully removes our love for this world through suffering, what hope do the unbelievers have?
Their only hope is in the good news that Jesus died for our sins. And Peter says, those who do not obey the gospel of God at the end of verse 17, disobedience is Peter's favorite way of referring to unbelievers because all unbelief expresses itself through disobedience.
And so if there's disobedience that you see in your life or someone else's, it comes from and has its root in a failure to properly believe in who God is and what he's spoken through his word.
And in verse 18, he quotes Proverbs 11, verse 31. If the righteous is scarcely saved, meaning, if the righteous is only saved through this suffering in this world, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?
[31:41] What does their future look like if this is how God begins to treat his people here in this world? If even God's children suffer painfully in order to be purified, what can be expected for rebels in the future?

Then number three, verse 19, entrust yourselves to God. Entrust yourselves to God. It says, therefore, concluding this whole section, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good.
Why does he call God creator here? Why doesn't he call him father? Why doesn't he call him a refuge? Why doesn't he call him a comforter?

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These people are suffering. Why does he refer to him as creator? I think he's intentionally reminding them of God's absolute control over everything in this world.
The God you serve is the God who made you. The God you serve is the one who hung the stars in the sky in the beginning. The God you serve is the one who made everything around us from nothing.
[33:00] He's a faithful creator. You can trust him with your life. You can continue to do good and to live faithfully and endure suffering because you know he is a faithful creator.

He is good and he is in control. He is the God who's sending your suffering but he's the God who has dealt with your suffering through Christ. He's the God who can put all of your suffering to an end in eternity because he is a faithful creator.
He's the ruler over absolutely everything. All suffering is according to God's will. No suffering comes into your life that was not sent from God ultimately but we know that he loves us and he has a good purpose in it.
What is his purpose? What are his purposes in our suffering? Three things to test to purify and to prepare.
These sufferings test our faith. These sufferings purify our soul from its love of sin and its love of this world and these sufferings prepare us to see the face of Jesus Christ.
[34:25] It prepares us to experience glory with no more suffering. It prepares us to leave this world and enter the joy of our creator.

And ultimately the biggest proof that God both causes suffering and has a good purpose in our suffering is seen on the cross.
Where Jesus suffers the wrath of the Father according to his will and his plan. Isaiah 53 10 says it was the will of the Lord to crush him.
and yet through that suffering that the Father caused he saves us through the death of his son.
He has a purpose in our suffering. He sends our suffering and he has a good purpose in our suffering and this word entrust is actually this word was on Jesus' lips as he died on the cross.
[35:35] He says in Luke 23 Father into your hand I commit or entrust my spirit same word on the cross in the midst of his suffering as he's following God's will and it led to the end of his life he says I entrust myself to you fully.

And Peter says entrust or commit your souls to a faithful creator while doing good.
We as believers should expect suffering in our lives. We should not be surprised by it. But not only should we expect suffering but we should rejoice in our suffering knowing that our suffering is from God it is for God and ultimately it makes us like God it makes us like Christ.
And so friends as you suffer whether you're suffering right now or you're suffering as yet future are you prepared to rejoice through those?
These trials will test your faith it will expose what's in your heart are you prepared to entrust your soul to a faithful creator while doing good?
[36:57] Let me pray for us. Our God and Father we love you and thank you so much for sending your son to die in our place so that we through faith in him might be set free from our sin.

But Father please don't let us be deceived into thinking that the rest of this life following Christ is easy or that it's not marked by suffering. Help us to remember the message of 1 Peter that suffering is the road we walk to glory because that's what we see in the life of your son Jesus.
That's what we see as our example. Father make us like your son. Use our suffering to teach us obedience and to make us long to see you face to face in heaven.
I pray for students here who are being disobedient to the word who have not placed their faith in Christ that you would open their eyes that you would break open their hearts so they could feel the love that you have displayed through your son.
I pray for those who have repented of their sins and are walking in obedience to you that you continue to sanctify them that you continue to make them more like Jesus and help them to love each other well.
[38:20] And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen.

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