

June 14th, 2026

Title: **Power in Suffering 1 Peter 4**

1 Peter 4:12-19

Lift up our Bibles:

Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path.

(Thank you for the Word)

Church Scripture Verse for today:

1 Peter 4:12-16 (ESV)

¹² Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³ Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. ¹⁶ But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian.

Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!

Why does God allow evil and suffering? We look around the world right now, and we see so much suffering around the world. There are people dying from wars right now as we speak. People are dying from cancer, stroke, and heart attacks. Little children are dying from diseases. There are many people suffering from mental health issues. How do we digest all of this?

How do we address the issue of suffering?

One of the main themes in 1 Peter is suffering. Now, the Bible talks about suffering throughout, but in **1 Peter, it appears 17 times**. That's a lot of suffering. Listen, suffering is a reality. Whether you like it or not, suffering will come. So the question is: how do you get through suffering?

Short Summary of 1 Peter 4

- How should Christians respond when faced with persecution?
- Expect God's purpose for your life to include suffering.
- Choose God's will instead of yourself.
- **God uses suffering to refine your faith.**

We will be honing in on **"God uses suffering to refine your faith"** today. Many years ago, there was a young kid in his fifth grade who said, **"I'm in pain! I am suffering! What's going on? Where are you hurting?"** And then he says, **"I have a math exam tomorrow, and I am suffering!"** You see, to this fifth-grade student, he is suffering. **"I'm working 12 hours in this heat, and I am suffering."** To this person who works outside, it is suffering for him.

Genuine Suffering:

From 1910 to 1945, Japan occupied Korea, and millions of Koreans suffered under the Japanese Empire. Here are just a few lists of their suffering.

- Koreans were deprived of assembly. They could not have a public gathering.
- There was no freedom of the press or speech.
- Thousands of Koreans were slaves to the military factories.
- Thousands of Korean women were "comfort women" for the Japanese soldiers.
- In school, if you spoke in Korean, you were beaten. That's why my mom, who is Korean and is 93 years old, still speaks Japanese.
- Farmlands and much of Korea's property were taken by the rulers of Japan. Even if it is your own house, they will take it.
- Towards the latter part of Japanese rule, they were forcing Koreans to worship at Japanese Shinto shrines.

And this was somewhat similar when the Romans occupied a foreign nation. A lot of people suffered under Rome, and the punishment for anyone who rebelled against Rome was crucifixion. ***They mastered the technique of crucifixion and fear.*** And they made sure you fully understood

what suffering was before they killed you. So, what does Peter say about suffering? Let's get into the Word.

1 Peter 4:12 (NLT)

Dear friends, **don't be surprised at the fiery trials (fiery ordeal) you are going through**, as if something strange were happening to you.

What was going on with the Christians during that time? There was the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD, and the city burned for about 9 days. **Nearly three-quarters of the Roman city had been destroyed.** The Roman Emperor Nero decided to put all the blame on Christians. So for close to 300 years, a lot of Christians were facing some form of suffering, and some died for their faith.

So when Peter is saying, "**Don't be surprised at the fiery trials.**" Peter reminds us that it is not about whether you will face suffering, but **when**. I met a young man asking, "**If I believe in Jesus, will my whole life be filled with prosperity and success. I watched a preacher talk about believing in God, and He will take care of all your needs, and then some more. God will give you good health and prosperity. Is that true?**"

Some religious people will take **Proverbs 10:22**, which says, "**The blessing of the LORD makes a person rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.**" Meaning you will be rich, and you will not suffer, but they will take this verse out of context. So some people will believe in that version of the false God.

When people only have that kind of knowledge of Christ, and when fiery trials come your way, and nothing good comes out of it, **you're going to get angry at God**. Or, you might even wonder if God is real. "**God! Why would you allow me to go through this suffering? I go to church on Sundays. I didn't sign up for this!**" Peter is simply saying, "**Do not think it strange or do not be surprised when suffering has come or will come your way.**"

There was a scene in which Jesus is telling His disciples that He has to go and be rejected by the Gentiles, and persecuted by the religious leaders, and tells them that He will be crucified. Jesus is going to go through a

massive suffering. But Peter rebukes Jesus for what He said, and Jesus' response was this.

Matthew 16:23-24 (NLT)

²³ Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. **You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.**" **(The human point is that Jesus should never go through any sufferings)** ²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, **you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.**

What was God's point of view? Jesus had to go through pain and suffering to get to the cross. God tells Paul the same thing. Paul, on the road to Damascus, was trying to persecute Christians when he encountered the living Christ. Blinded by the light. And God sends a man named **Ananias**, a follower of Jesus, and tells him to go heal Paul. And Ananias is like, "**Why? Maybe he should suffer a bit.**" That's a human perspective, right? But this is what God said about Paul.

Acts 9:15-16 (NLT)

¹⁵ But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles **(non-Jews)** and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ And I will show him how much **he must suffer for my name's sake.**"

You know, I have always wondered about this thought. If God told Paul that (2 Corinthians 11) he would be in prison many times, flogged severely many times, five times receiving 40 lashes, three times being beaten with rods, once pelted with stones, three times being shipwrecked, and in danger from rivers and bandits, and on and on it goes - **would Paul have taken this job?**

Think about that for a moment. If you knew in advance that you would be going through what the Apostle Paul went through, would you take the job? Would you be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ? **If you have a deep relationship with Jesus, everyone would say yes, because you understood what the suffering was for.**

Here is what I learned about our heavenly Father: ***God will not let you take this job or this suffering if He knew you would fail.*** When God takes you on a faith journey, it is because He knows you will be able to finish the race in this season of life. What God started in you, God will complete it. That's why the next verse says this.

1 Peter 4:13 (NLT)

¹³ Instead, be **very glad**—for these trials make you **partners with Christ in his suffering**, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

What does that mean to “**partner with Christ in his suffering?**” Other versions will say, “**participate** in the sufferings of Christ,” or “But rejoice that you **share** in the sufferings of Christ.” What does it mean to **participate**, partake, or **share** in the sufferings of Christ?

Participate or share in the sufferings of Christ: Jesus intentionally suffered so that you and I can be set free, right? Jesus took all the whipping of lashes, the mocking, the crown of thorns on his head, and carried the heavy cross over 600 yards to His death. ***Jesus intentionally suffered on the cross so that you and I can be set free.*** And when we die, we will be with Him in heaven, right?

One day, my wife decided to minister to someone in need. So she would pray through the night without any sleep and get up early in the morning to cook not just for one day, but for many days. And on top of that, she was doing errands for the church, praying, and still serving. I asked her, “**Why are you doing all this for that person?**” She said, “**So that she can feel loved by God.**” She was willing to suffer so that one person could feel loved.

There was this one street preacher who went to an unfriendly area. This place was very dark in the spirit. He went into hostile territory just to share the good news. These people were mocking him; some were spitting at him, and others threw things at him, but he endured and shared the truth.

Someone asked this question: “**Why do you keep doing this? No one wants you here.**” It just happens that there was a person who used to go to church, but then later on in his young adult life, he walked away from God and the church, and he was far from God. But he witnessed this street preacher, unafraid of man, sharing God’s truth. ***It was at this point in his life that he was considering suicide***, but because of the street preacher, he decided to commit his life back to God. ***This street preacher was willing to partake and share in Christ's suffering.***

And I look across our congregation, and I see many of you willing to serve every Sunday. Many of you come during weekdays to pray, serve, and help people who need ministering. I see many of you willing to partake and share in Christ's suffering. So I just want to say thank you to all of you from the bottom of my heart.

What I realized is that when you do not participate in or share in Christ's sufferings, ***all your pain and suffering are meaningless. And it is that meaninglessness that drives people to despair.*** When suffering has no meaning or purpose in Christ, then that is when we fall into depression and despair. “**I just don’t understand! Why? Why God?**” is what we end up with.

When we partake and share in Christ's sufferings, He tells us, “**We are going to get through this together. I want you to be strong and courageous. I know that the future is uncertain. I need you to trust me. I am going to walk with you. We will get through this together.**”

This is what happens when we participate in and share in Christ's sufferings. Your suffering has purpose and meaning. Listen, ***when you are in pain, God will explain, because you have partaken and shared in Christ's suffering.*** All your suffering will start to make sense.

1 Peter 4:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ If you suffer,

however, it must not be for murder, stealing (thief), making trouble (evildoer), or prying into other people's affairs (**busybody**).

"I've stolen some stuff, and now I am in jail. I am suffering." Yea! Of course, because you stole what was not yours. So Peter is saying that ***if you are suffering for the right reasons, you will be blessed. But if you're suffering for all the wrong reasons, then you won't be blessed.*** And you're not going to understand why you are suffering?

But then in verse 15, it equates murder with a busybody. Did you get this? Is Peter connecting sin like murder with being a busybody? How is being a busybody bad or sinful?

Busybody in Greek is ***allotriepiskopos*** pronounced **al-lot-ree-ep-is'-kop-os**, meaning a troublesome meddler interfering in the affairs of others.

The idea is someone who takes more entertainment value in the lives of other people than their own life. In other words, ***you are really not concerned for the other person, genuinely, but you are entertained by other people, like gossip.*** You talk about others or gossip, and that entertains you. You get a kick out of it. You make judgments about other people's lives instead of focusing on living your own. ***You are busy with other people's lives more than your own.***

So it is not about sacrifice or being selfless for the cause of Christ, but about being busy with other people's lives and interfering in or prying into their affairs. So, with that kind of heart and attitude, Peter connects busybodies with murders. That's why verse 16 makes sense.

1 Peter 4:16 Amplified Bible

but if *anyone suffers* [ill-treatment] as a **Christian** [because of his belief], he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God [because he is considered worthy to suffer] in this name.

Did you know that the name "**Christian**" appears only three times in the Bible? Did you know that the early church didn't call itself Christians? They

were believers in “**the way**,” or “**brethren**.” Christian was the term that was derogatory and degrading term. A nickname given to them by Romans and Greeks ***who wanted to come up with a term that set them apart from the rest of the Roman Empire.***

You see, most of the Roman Empire was called **Caesarians** for those who followed Caesar. These were people who supported Julius Caesar and his legacy. They were loyal to him and **associated with him**. Because Christians were a sect that was not in allegiance to Rome or bow to the Roman Emperor. They were given a different title, **Christians**. They were followers of Christ, and not Caesar. They won't say, “**Caesar is Lord**.” They will say, “**Jesus is Lord**.” And so it was a term that was derogatory in nature.

Think about that, knowing that it means a disgusting association, a derogatory name, they were willing to be called a Christian. “**I am embracing a derogatory name.**” If that is what it takes to become a follower of Christ, then I will partake in it and share in the sufferings of Christ.

1 Peter 4:17 (NLT)

¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment, and **it must begin with God's household**. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News?

Why? Why must it begin with God's household? **To purify His church**. Not to harm us but to get us ready. Sometimes God will allow suffering to be a purifying agent. This is what happens when God starts to purify His church.

Romans 5:3-5 (NLT)

³ We can **rejoice**, too, when we run into **problems and trials**, for we know that they help us **develop endurance**. ⁴ And **endurance develops strength of character**, and character strengthens our **confident hope of salvation**. ⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

So, ***when we face trials, tribulations, and suffering, we develop endurance.*** Endurance then develops strength of character (a positive attribute), and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. Meaning when we endure to the end, we will be with Jesus in heaven. So ***Philippians 1:6*** will start to make sense: ***And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work (purifying work) until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.***

The idea is that because God loves us, God allows us to go through purification, which leads us to endurance, strength, and strong character that will not waver to the left or right but will be focused on Jesus.

1 Peter 4:18 (NLT)

And also, “If the righteous are **barely saved**, what will happen to godless sinners?”

Meaning, the fire we endure now purifies the believers, but for those who reject God, the ***ungodly will not inherit the kingdom of God.*** So God judges His children during our life on earth in order to strengthen and purify our faith. And those who reject Christ will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Peter is not saying that Christians who try really hard to be saved, and then they will barely make it into heaven by their best efforts. Remember, we make it into heaven not by our work or efforts, but purely by our genuine faith and belief in Jesus. ***What Peter is saying is that eternal salvation through faith in Christ comes “with difficulty” in this life.***

The idea is that, as believers, when we face hardships in life, ***they increase our trust in Him*** and make us more and more like Him. For the ungodly, the opposite happens. Why does this happen? ***And they leave the church, and some leave their faith.***

Some believers feel that ***their suffering is a punishment from God.***

All of us deserve the wrath of God. All of our sins deserve a punishment from God. So here is the question: How much of the punishment of our sin (**that we deserve**) was placed on the cross? 80%? 90%? It is 100%, correct?

Jesus was punished 100% on the cross for our sin. Jesus took 100% of our guilt and shame and put it on the cross with His death. So, as believers, we are now free from guilt and shame, and the Holy Spirit dwells in us to help sanctify and purify us to be made in His image.

Because Jesus took on all the wrath and punishment for our sins upon Himself, you and I do not receive punishment or wrath. ***It might feel like punishment, but it's purification.*** God is purifying us.

Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)

For the Lord **disciplines** the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

In the beginning, when we first read it, it seemed like a very harsh thing that God does, but in reality, the words "discipline" and "chastise," or "punishment," actually mean "**training**" when you put them together. So **God is training us, forming us, and developing our character to be in His image.**

So just remember this. ***When God allows Christians to suffer, it is because He has a purpose in mind.*** He is training and equipping us for things to come. You just need to trust in what God is doing in our lives. So the next verse will start to make sense.

1 Peter 4:19 (NIV)

So then, those who suffer **according to God's will** should **commit** themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

He is saying, "So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, ***keep on doing what is right,*** and ***trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.***" ***You can never fail when you are with God.***

You know what is very interesting is that Peter uses the word "commit." Here is what it means in the original language.

Commit in Greek is ***paratithēmi*** pronounced **par-at-ith'-ay-mee**, meaning to deposit, to entrust, or commit to one's charge.

The word “**commit**” is a banking term that means to deposit something for safekeeping. “**I’m going to deposit my trust. I do not understand what’s happening. I am going through some suffering. This is so hard. This is so painful. I don’t get it. So because of these thoughts, I will deposit my trust in God’s bank.**” That’s the picture when you “commit” to God.

And here’s the truth: when you deposit your trust in God’s bank, **you will get dividends of blessings in your account.** Meaning, you will get a reward for “committing” to God. **God will not let any of your deposits go to waste.** Every bit of trust you deposit into God’s bank, He will reward you.

Why does God allow evil and suffering?

I was in the airplane and opened my Bible to read. A young lady next to me, a medical student from Johns Hopkins, asked me this question: ***If God is a good God, then why does He allow suffering?*** Why does God allow evil and suffering?

My response: “**If God is a good God, and we associate the goodness of God with evil, then what do we associate evil with?**” She had no idea, so told her a story about a person named **Mother Teresa** or **Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who was a nun.** In Calcutta, India, at that time, there was extreme poverty. In 1943, there was what is called “**The Bengal famine,**” which killed hundreds of people. And in **1946, there began a period of Muslim vs Hindu violence.** So there was famine, death, and violence all around, and evil was all around her. Mother Teresa received a vision from Jesus telling her to serve in the city of Calcutta in India. So **in 1950, she took off, by herself, and for a whole year, she struggled and suffered because she had no help.** Here she is trying to obey Jesus and the poor, but she was suffering, and she was surrounded by people who were suffering.

People were dropping off people with diseases, the sick, and those nearing death at her front door. Listen, because the world was so filled with evil and darkness, God would send someone like Mother Teresa in her own suffering to help the poor, those in pain and suffering.

God is a good God because there is so much suffering in the world, and **he would send someone like Mother Teresa to be the light in Calcutta, India**, at that time. He knows that the world is filled with evil, and He chooses His chosen instruments to bring as many people out of evil and suffering. That is why God sends chosen people to our neighborhood, to different states, to the nation, and to foreign countries.

The apostle Paul was doing lots of work for the Lord. He was receiving visions and revelations from God and expanding God's kingdom. Then one day, he received a **"thorn in the flesh."** It was a physical pain, and he cried out to God three times to get rid of it. But here is what God said to Paul.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NLT)

⁹ Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. **My power works best in weakness.**" So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the **power of Christ can work through me.** ¹⁰ That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

That's why Peter says, **"I will rejoice in my suffering. Because I know that when I am weak, then I am strong."** Listen, God's power is drawn to our surrender and submission in our weakness. His power begins when you have nothing left. God's power kicks in when my power runs out.