



May the Spirit of Glory Rest upon Our Life Together Life Together: Cultivating Covenant Community Series #6

1 Peter 4:12-14

David Sunday

November 16, 2014

Eternal God, draw our hearts to You. Guide our minds. Capture and fill our imaginations. Control our wills that we may be wholly and unreservedly Yours, a living sacrifice to You. Let us be utterly dedicated to You, Lord, not holding back one bit. May our minds, wills and emotions be wholly yours. Lord, cause us to live for Your glory and for the good of Your people, as we trust more and more in the work Your Son did on the cross to redeem us from our sins. We depend wholly on Your Holy Spirit, apart from Whom we would be dead in our sins. Oh, God, quicken in us lively affections for You. Stir us, Lord, where we are sluggish. Rescue us from worldliness. Sharpen our vision and speak to us now through Your Word, that Christ may reign over every heart and every mind. We pray this in His holy name. Amen.

It is very good to be back home with you from Indonesia. I am so glad for the opportunity to have taken the trip with Mike Jacoby and Marv Newell. We will report on that trip later in this service. Our focus today is on what our brothers and sisters throughout the world are experiencing as they remain true to Christ and His gospel. We are going to hear a report about the persecuted church in Pakistan from our brother, Yusef, who is here with us this morning, along with his wife, Ruth. We welcome you to New Covenant, Yusef and Ruth.

Before we hear from them, I would like you to turn to God's Word and allow 1 Peter 4:12-14 to set the tone for our worship together. Let us worship God as we hear His Word to us in 1 Peter, beginning at verse 12. Peter wrote:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you [notice, Peter doesn't say "if it comes," but "when it comes"], 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 glory and of God rests upon you.

Thanks be to God for His living Word!

There are certain vocations which, if you go into them, you know you will have to put up with a measure of suffering, hardship and insults. I think of customer service representatives. You know if you sign up for that job that you are going to get angry phone calls. You will have people show up at your desk who are not happy, and it is your job to put up with insults, hardships and difficulties. Think of umpires and referees. If you take that job, you know you will be heckled. People will not like calls that you make. As we have remembered Veteran's Day this week, I think especially of our soldiers who went into service knowing it could cost them their lives. They did not enter into service to protect us thinking that this was going to be easy for them, and we are so thankful for their service.

But what about being a follower of Jesus? Do we expect hardship? Do we expect difficulty to come as a result of following Him? When the great evangelist, George Whitefield, graduated from Oxford University and prepared to enter the Anglican ministry, he said, "I am now about to take orders and my degree and go into the world. What will become of me I know not. All I can say is that I look for perpetual conflicts and struggles in that life, and hope for no other peace, but only a cross while on this side of eternity."

Now, when you hear those words, do you think, "Well, of course, he was going to be a minister of the gospel. He was going to be a preacher. That's what he should expect, but us normal Christians shouldn't"? Peter said, "Think again. If you are not expecting hardship, difficulty, insults and persecution for being a disciple of Jesus Christ, why not? Why aren't you expecting this?"

Peter said that we should not expect anything different than what George Whitefield expected when he entered his ministry—perpetual conflicts, struggles, "no peace, but only a cross while on this side of eternity."

Do Not Be Thrown Off by Sufferings for Jesus

Peter gave us two main exhortations in these verses. First, do not be thrown off by sufferings for Jesus. Don't be thrown off! We see this in verse 12, which says, "*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you...*" Peter called God's people to sober up. We see this in 4:7: "*The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.*" In other words, Peter said, "Get things in perspective. Be sober about where you are in world history. The end of all things is at hand. We are in the final stages of redemptive history. There is going to be a battle, so sober up!"

We see this again in 5:-, where Peter said, *“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”*

We also see this in 1 Peter 1:13. Peter said, *“Therefore, preparing your minds for action...”* One of the reasons we come to church is to prepare our minds for action as disciples of Jesus. *“...[A]nd being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* Don't be thrown off by what you are going to experience in this world.

Darryl Dash, a pastor in Toronto, says:

If we are living on our own strength rather than living prayer-filled lives, we are living like drunks. We need to sober up. If we don't think we have an enemy who is trying to thwart the advance of the gospel, then we are living like drunks. We need to sober up. If we are surprised when we suffer, we have underestimated our enemy. We need to sober up.

Suffering, Peter said, is not a surprising exception in a Christian's life. Suffering is the norm. It is part of the refiner's fire. It is part of what God puts His people through to prove, purify and strengthen Christians. It comes upon us, Peter said in 4:12, as a “fiery trial” to test us, to prove the genuineness of our faith, which is more precious than gold, and that we *“may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (1:7).

It comes to prove us and a positive outcome is anticipated in that test. God expects His children to pass the test, to go through the fiery trial, and to come forth as gold. One commentator says suffering is not a sign of God's absence in the Christian's life; it is actually a sign of His purifying presence. We ought not to think it strange. That is the first exhortation Peter gave us in these verses.

Suffering for Jesus Should Fuel Our Joy

The second exhortation is a corollary to the first. Instead of being thrown off and surprised, thinking it is strange when fiery trials, hardships and adversity come to test our faith, we should let suffering for Jesus fuel our joy. Peter's second exhortation is that we should let suffering for Jesus fuel our joy in Jesus.

Our dear brother, Phil Bloom, recently said to me, “The best compliment I ever received was when a co-worker told me he didn't want anything more to do with me because I am a ‘Jesus

freak.” Phil told him, “You couldn’t have said anything more nice to me than to call me that.” He rejoiced at being insulted for the name of Jesus Christ.

Richard Wurmbrand suffered under the Romanian Communists; he was beaten, scarred and forced to live under solitary confinement for a long period of time. He said there were times when he was so overcome for joy that he would stand up and dance around in his prison cell as if the angels were dancing with him. That is something only a Christian can understand.

Peter said, “*But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed*” (4:13). Why and how can we rejoice like this? In these verses, Peter gave us three reasons why we should let suffering for Jesus fuel our joy. The first reason is our identification with Christ in His sufferings.

Peter’s command here is to “*rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings.*” The sufferings you endure for being a disciple of Jesus are a pledge that you belong to Him and are united with Him Who:

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood.

(Philip Bliss, “Hallelujah! What a Savior!”, 1875)

When you suffer for the name of Jesus, you show that you are united with Him.

Joseph Tson, another Romanian Christian whom I have had the privilege of hearing speak in person, says, “The union with Christ is the most beautiful subject in the Christian life. It means I am not a lone fighter here. I am an extension of Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body. It is not my suffering. I only had the honor to share His sufferings.” Rejoice, because you are sharing Christ’s sufferings!

Another Christian from history I respect immensely is Helen Roseveare, a British medical doctor who took the gospel to Zaire. During the 1964 revolution, she and some of her co-workers experienced brutality and unspeakable torture for 5½ months, and she initially started to doubt God’s presence with her. But, as she was struggling, remarkably a peace that passed all understanding (Philippians 4:7) started to fill her mind with the overwhelming sense of the presence and peace of God, as if God Himself were saying to her these words: “Twenty years ago, you asked Me for the privilege of being a missionary, the privilege of being identified with Me. This is it! Do you want it? This is what it means. These are not your sufferings. They are Mine. All I ask of you is the loan of your body.”

That is getting an understanding of our identification with Christ. Peter said when we start thinking that way it brings joy to our sufferings.

Second, we can rejoice in our sufferings because of the anticipation of future joy that comes when we suffer with Jesus. We also see this in verse 13, where Peter said, *“But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”* You see, Jesus suffered and then entered into glory, and that is the same pattern the Christian's life follows. We suffer and then enter into glory.

When Jesus returns in His glorious reveal, we see the scars in His hands and remember that He is the worthy Lamb Who was slain for us and Who suffered for us. All the sufferings we endure here on earth are only going to accentuate and make that joy all the greater when we see Him face-to-face. Peter said, “As you anticipate that future glory, let it fuel your joy in the midst of your present sufferings.”

Finally, rejoice and be glad when you suffer for Jesus, because it brings about a manifestation (a showing forth) of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. I believe there is a power, a presence of God and a manifestation of the Spirit that can only be seen in the church as Christians are willing to endure hardship for Jesus. I believe this because of verse 14, which says, *“If you are insulted for the name of Christ [if you are sidelined; if you lose position and comfort, prestige and a sense of security in the Christian life; if people despise you and say all kinds of evil against you for the sake of the name], you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”*

God's Spirit—the Spirit of Glory—rests upon believers in a unique and special way when we are insulted, bear hardship and suffer for the name of Christ. It is His Spirit and presence with us that enables us to suffer for the name of Christ. When we hear a testimony about persecution, I think we are sometimes afraid to endure such things if they come upon us. How would I stand up under such persecution?

Corrie Ten Boom was a young girl in Europe when the Nazis were advancing and she was afraid. What would happen if the Germans came to her town and her home, which they eventually did? Would she be able to endure? She talked to her dad about this and he gave her a beautiful illustration. He said, “When you are going to take a journey on the train, do I give you your ticket three weeks early or do I hand it to you right as you are about to get on the train?” She said, “Right when I get on the train.” Her dad said, “So God will give you the special strength you need to endure hardship precisely at the moment you need it.”

Peter affirmed that truth for us. When we are insulted for the name of Christ, we are blessed. The Spirit of Glory and of God will rest upon us. It is God and His presence that will give us strength to endure hardship. He will give us strength to suffer and will even give us strength if we are called upon to die for the name of Jesus.

The question for us is how much do we want God's blessing in our lives? There is a blessing there that we don't often think of as blessed. You are blessed to suffer for Jesus. You are blessed to be insulted for Jesus. You are blessed to go through fiery trials for Jesus. Is this a blessing we want?

As we read verses like this, it should make us less ashamed of the gospel. It should make us more willing to wave our banner high and say, "Yes, I am delighted to identify with Jesus Christ in this world, come what may, no matter what it may cost me. I want the blessing of being identified with Him, being bold for Him and sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings. I want to become like Him in His death, in order that I may also attain the resurrection from the dead."

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, I pray, as we believe the name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that You would remind us that we belong to Him and He belongs to us. We are His through purchase, conquest and self-surrender. He redeemed us with His blood. He conquered our unruly wills and made us willingly and gladly surrender to His lordship. He will be with us in every trial and difficulty. He will hold us fast. May the truths that we read in Your Word not just be ideas and concepts that we affirm. There is a blessing here, Lord, that I pray we would desire. I pray, Lord, that we would not be ashamed of the gospel and would not be ashamed to be identified with Your Son, Jesus. May we embrace the cost of discipleship, for we know, Lord, that it is a treasure worth giving our all to belong to Jesus. May He be more than all the world to us. May He be all-in-all to us. We pray that Your Spirit of Glory would rest upon us as a church. Oh, breath of God, fill this place and this body of believers with the presence of the risen Christ. We ask this in His name. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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