

# Suffering in the Name of Christ

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Alright, well, I'm not quite sure what surprises you. I don't like surprises, really. There are things that surprise me and there are things that shouldn't.

I don't like going to scary movies, I just don't like them. I don't like surprises. But there are some things that should surprise you and some things that shouldn't.

As we come to One Pity Chapter 4, we'll see them. I'll see that there are some things that surprise those who are not yet Christians and there are some things that surprise Christians which really shouldn't have been a surprise.

Bible-believing Christians have an objective view of life in the world because we have God's Word on life in the world. And so far we've seen a number of highlights as we've worked our way through One Peter.

We've seen that the believer has new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We have the believer knowing that they've set their hopes fully on the grace of the revelation of Jesus Christ when he returns.

[ 1 : 0 5 ]     The believer has a purpose in life which is because we belong, we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that we are to declare his praises to the world around about us.

That's what we're to do. We've been brought out of darkness and brought into light. In short, the believer is different because the believer, you and I are Christians, we're strangers, we're aliens, we're living in a foreign environment really, we're living in exile outside of our homeland, we live this side of heaven looking forward to being at home.

And time after time, Peter's raised for his readers that they are to expect to suffer for the name of Christ. It shouldn't be a surprise when suffering comes our way.

So at the time it was very real for these people in 65 AD or so. Emperor Nero was in charge of the Roman Empire and he had Christians persecuted and killed in all kind of manner and hideous ways.

And Christians still suffer terribly for faith now. Until around, well even today we still suffer, don't we? But Christians were the outsiders really until about 350 or 400 AD.

[ 2 : 3 2 ]     And up until that time, emperors like Domitian and Decian, they were brutes when it came to living as Christians in the first century. Christians have suffered all through history.

In fact, the 20th century was one of the blackest, bloodiest centuries on record for Christians. It's estimated, this is just 20 years ago, it's estimated that in the 2,000 years of Christianity, prior to the year 2000, roughly, about 70 million faithful people gave their lives for Jesus, right?

In the first 2,000 years of Christian history. And of those, 45.5 million died in the 20th century alone.

And it continues, as we know, in various places around the world today. So this part of the Bible, one of the most important parts of the Bible, you've read concerning being a Christian in the 21st century.

It's not the kind of sermon you need to hear if you're suffering right now for being a Christian, right? I hope you can bear with it. But it's a sermon you need to hear before you suffer as a Christian.

[ 4 : 00 ] So that when we do, when we do, we can put it in place, right, into practice. So at one level in Australia and the West, we don't get persecuted for our faith nearly as much as other parts of the world.

There's no exclusion from university. There's no prevention from promotion at work. There's no death threats to the family, from family members, if you were to become a Christian, like there is in Malaysia and Pakistan and the sub-Saharan Africa, or the Middle East.

But there is, kind of, in Australia still, if you become a Christian into a Muslim background in Australia, it is tough, right?

The persecution we get in this land for our faith is fairly minuscule now, but it is increasing. And God's word is to prepare us to live now and in the future, whatever the circumstances are that our Heavenly Father places us in.

Which then brings us to this passage this morning. You see there in verse 1 that Christ, since therefore Christ suffered in his flesh, arm yourself with the same way of thinking.

[ 5 : 29 ] Christ suffered in the flesh in obedience to the Father's will for the glory to come. He did that and we should think the same way about suffering as he did.

Now the classic passage you all know is Hebrews chapter 12, right? Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1. Have a listen to this. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet come to the point of shedding your blood.

So brothers and sisters, don't lose heart, don't become demoralised, don't give up on Jesus when things get tough. This is normal, faithful Christian living.

[ 6 : 39 ] And those who teach that Christians will, and becoming a Christian will bring prosperity and perfect health and power and prestige are preaching a fourth gospel. Whoever has suffered in the flesh for doing good, not evil, for their allegiance to Jesus demonstrates that they are actually followers, truly followers of Jesus.

Those who have suffered in the flesh because of their allegiance to Jesus have begun a new way of life which is radically different to the world around about us. It says here, we have ceased from sin.

Did you see that there? Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as not to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions.

This doesn't mean that we are now living a perfectly sin-free life. No. That would be contradicting the very scriptures themselves. Rather, it's the decision to say enough is enough.

It's a decision to align our life with the way that Jesus would have us live in his holiness, being holy because the Lord our God is holy. Every day lived according to the will of the sinful human passion was one too many.

[ 7 : 53 ] Right? The time has passed, it's over, it's obsolete now, verse 3, it's done. That way of life, though, for a believer, is surprising to the world around about us.

Now, we're now entering that period called the silly season. You know? Traditionally called the silly season in Australia. It's a season which should be a time of remembering the birth of our Saviour, but instead in many circles it's a time of idolatry and greed and debauchery, of excessive spending, of drinking, of partying, the debauchery of schoolies is all too sad and too bad.

Christmas and New Year can be one long pagan festival, can't it? Where the office, the work Christmas party can be an excuse for getting drunk and all kinds of immorality.

The warnings go out from senior management, don't they? Behave yourself now, kids, when you go to your Christmas party, don't be going drinking too much. They're afraid of the repercussions and the HR turmoil that will come out of it.

But Christians, we won't give ourselves to that kind of living. We won't. In short, we'll give ourselves not to debauchery, not to a world of living free of any care of moral distance.

[ 9 : 22 ] We'll not be greedy of sensuality, that is, the lack of constraint which leads to a conduct which violates all bounds of social acceptability.

We'll not indulge in the sinful passions in the negative sense, right? The desire for that which God forbids. We'll not drink to excess and drunkenness which leads to the loss of any inhibitions and self-control.

We won't be engaged in orgies, the excessive feasting and fornication that goes on with inebriation that follows the drinking parties. And because we've given up going after the sinful desire, we don't plunge into the way the world lives, this fallen world, well, those who see us should rightly think that we're strange.

In fact, they are surprised, we're told. But we won't care. They may think we're weird and that may be so according to the values of the world but instead, we will live the rest of our life according to the will of God which Peter's been teaching all through this letter.

We have ceased with, we have done with sin. Had enough with it, we're sick of sin. It's repulsive to us. It's like dogs vomit to us.

[ 10 : 50 ] Foul in stench, foul in taste, foul in sight and we would never lick it up. The truth is that anyone and everything will meet God.

You see in verses five and six, the living and the dead. Have a look again with me there. But they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

And that will be a rude surprise for the vast majority of our world. The dead here is all who have died whether believer or unbeliever.

This meeting will be one of bone-chilling, fear-inducing, unwelcome surprise to the vast majority of the world.

That will be the case for those who denied the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and lived like this world is all there is. That much is clear enough, right?

[ 12 : 09 ] But verse six, gets a little bit difficult to understand. Have a look at it. For this is why the gospel is preached even to those who are dead that they're judged in the flesh the way people are.

They might live in the spirit the way God does. Now, for this, right? Now, what is this referring to?

Well, it refers to what immediately comes before the fall, right? And so it's that one day everyone will be judged by God.

You can't escape it by dying. The suicide bomber will meet the true and living God and be condemned for it. Those who are alive at the time of the judgment or have died before it comes will still be judged.

There's no hint of ceasing to exist for anyone who has died. It's not annihilation.

[ 13 : 16 ] And so it's for this reason that the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead. Now, there's a few ways we could understand that. And the best in my mind is the gospel was proclaimed to people after Christ lived and died, who believed in him and they themselves have then died.

I'll say it again. It's the gospel has been preached after Jesus Christ is risen and died and risen from the dead and then they have believed in the gospel that Jesus is the Lord of the universe and then they have died.

That's a sense of even. The fact that even believers have died before Jesus returned was a strange thing, a kind of surprise for believers, that believers struggled with.

they were expecting Jesus to appear in their lifetime and when he didn't it seemed, well, what's gone wrong? What's happened here? Are these people who have died, are they going to miss out on glory?

Who trusted in Jesus? 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 13 and 14 is the place to go to read about that. And so those believers who died, they have been judged according to the flesh just like all people, just like in the same way that people are.

[ 14 : 54 ] The wages of sin is death, right? We're told in Romans chapter 6 verse 23, the wages of sin is death. Death is the verdict, the judgment because we've all sinned and the only one who didn't sin was the Lord Jesus and yet having heard and believed the gospel, believers, you say here, they live in the spirit.

That is, they live in the spirit realm. They're not bound with chains and held in gloomy darkness as the spirits in prison. Believers live in the same domain as God does now.

Those who have died are now living in the same domain as God does now in the spirit. spirit. We're not talking about second chance for those who have died.

That is, that people will die, then they can hear the gospel, and then they can repent and believe, and then they can be saved. We're not talking about that.

No, man is, we know, in Hebrews 9.27, you know the verse, man is destined to die once and after that, face the judgment. moment. And so since we live in the spirit in the same way that God does, right, we see the way we live now while on earth is living in the spirit, living the way that God does, notice the time, the end of all things is near, see there verses 7 to 11, the end of all things is at hand, therefore, be self controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers, above all, keep loving one other earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins.

[ 16 : 54 ] Living in the spirit, notice the time, the end of all things, the end is nigh. You know, those fellas who walk around with the sandwich boards over their shoulders, they are right, kooky, strange, but they're right, the end is nigh, life is short, and no matter how long we live, or this world continues to exist, in comparison to eternity, it's just a fraction of time, just a second, really.

And that's the perspective, right, that's the perspective that we're to have as we live these days that God gives us. Now, I'm not one for wearing an A-board and walking around the streets saying the end of all things is nigh, but it's true, it is.

And because the end is near, we need to be self-controlled, why? Well, so we can pray. Well, more literally, sane, so we can pray.

We'll be clear-headed, knowing the time. And I'm going to preach this to myself as much as I possibly can. Know the time, the time is short, that it's urgent, this days that God gives us.

There's an urgency about the gospel. Our prayers will be kingdom-shaped prayers. Yeah? Not always self-interested prayers focused on my agenda and my kingdom and my needs, as important as they are.

[ 18 : 39 ] Our prayers will be like the prayers that Jesus taught us, that Jesus taught his disciples. Kingdom-shaped prayers, gospel-shaped prayers, that the nations might come to faith, that our friends might come to faith, that our family might come to faith, faith, that'll be the nuance, the direction of our prayers, given that the end of all things is near, amongst many, many other prayers that we will be praying.

And Peter goes on with the list of how to live, but I'll just pick up on what he thinks is most important right here, what he thinks is most important, and that is verse 8, love. Which he says is above all, before all things, love is to be the overriding character of the Christian fellowship.

Love is to be the controlling factor in the use of the gifts that God gives us. And there are a number of gifts like this in the New Testament. He's not saying that we'll all have one of these gifts, right, and we should find it.

We may have a number of gifts given to us, this is not exclusive, but how we use the gifts is ultimately important. And love is to be the consistent unfailing character of Christian fellowship.

The world doesn't like us. The last thing we should be having is believers not loving one another.

[ 20 : 22 ] love will cover, love will overlook, love will not take to heart the sins that others have against me.

Now that's something, isn't it? Love bears with people who sin against us, not holding someone's sin against them when it comes to relationships.

in fact, it will forgive them their sin against me. That's what it will do. I won't dwell on their sin against me.

I won't tell others their sin against me. I won't bring up their sin with them against me.

I won't let it hinder our personal relationship. In that way, love will cover multiple factors of sin in a fellowship.

[ 21 : 26 ] We'll be bearing with each other, loving each other. The idea of covering sin is to quote from the Proverbs chapter 10 verse 12. Listen to this one. Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offences.

Or 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Love is patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, doesn't keep a record of wrongs.

Love covers a multitude of sins. Stirring up strife is the very opposite of love. Now where there is love, our offences against the other are overlooked and then forgotten and not brought up again.

Where there is little love, every word is weighed, every inclination of every nuance of the eye look or the facial expression is examined and critiqued.

Every motive is suspected, actions are easily misunderstood and conflict flares up and abounds. Love is a sign of maturity and where there is little love, maturity.

[ 23 : 07 ] The life of the believer is one that's strange. It's a surprise to the world in very positive ways. But notice something that may seem strange, that may surprise the Christian and that is sharing in Christ's sufferings.

So have a look at this strange joy that goes on in verse 12 to 19. When suffering comes we're not to be surprised by it. We're not to see it as something strange but to see it as a strange joy really.

Don't be surprised, you see there in verse 12. Don't be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you.

Now that's a strange command. but a comforting one at one level. Jesus tells us that we're to rejoice when people insult us because that's the way they treated the holy prophets of old.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

[ 24 : 28 ] Jesus also tells us that no teacher, no one, that no pupil is above their master, Matthew chapter 10. We're to expect to be treated by the world the same way that Jesus was treated, poorly, hated, maligned, misrepresented, slanted, murdered by his very own people.

Don't be surprised. Paul says the same thing in 1 Timothy chapter 3. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life, 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 12, everyone who wants to live a godly life, I take it that's all of us, in Christ Jesus, will be persecuted.

Not persecuted because you're living a good and gentle and that kind of life, but a godly life, one that's God-orientated life. one that's living against the flow of the world, one that's preaching that Christ is crucified, risen from the dead and will return to judge.

People will persecute us for that message, won't like it. Jesus says it, Paul says it, Peter says it, God says it.

That's to be our expectation as we live as strangers, as refugees, as aliens, as exiles in this world. Persecution from non-believers is one thing. We're not to be surprised by that, we can expect that, but let me tell you, the hardest kind of persecution to cope with is when it comes from those who call themselves Christians, that's the hardest.

[ 26 : 14 ] That's hard to cope with, but unfortunately it's a fact of life. and it seems that the way that we suffer in the West is not from non-Christians throwing bottles on the roofs and breaking our bones, but by other believers out to do us harm.

And the difficult thing to do is to rejoice in it. That's the particularly strange, particularly difficult. No one in their right mind will enjoy it, desire it, that's right.

but God's word is not to rejoice in it because you're a masochist, but to rejoice in it because you are suffering for the name of Christ. It's an external sign, a confirmation that you are a Christian, and that's entering into the suffering that Christ Jesus himself entered into.

So we will rejoice when his glory is revealed, verse 13. When we see him exalted in power and might, we will see him in his kingdom and we will say, yes, we're with him. When we see him in the role of king and judge and rule the universe, we'll be there with him.

And as hard as it is at the time, we're to see it as a blessing to be counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus, for bearing his name. It's a sign that the spirit of glory, that God's holy spirit of glory is resting on you, on me.

[ 27 : 42 ] But notice the provision clause in verse 15, the provision clause in verse 15, but let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

It's because you're suffering as a Christian, someone who loves Christ, who belongs to Christ, not because you're suffering punishment for a crime. And verse 16, if we suffer for being a Christian, it isn't a shameful thing.

If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. It's nothing to be maligned, insulted, treated me badly, because, and here's the things, those who are mature Christians will see beyond the scars, will see beyond the ridicule, will see beyond the maligning, will see beyond the slander, see beyond the reviling, and know that you are someone who is truly a follower of Jesus.

The comforting thing here is that there is a judgment to come. Verse 17 and 18. But be careful wanting it to come, for there's a time for judgment to begin with 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 are scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

Evil men and women will not get away with their wickedness, there will be complete thorough judgment. I mean, Nero didn't win, didn't escape it, Hitler did not win, Pol Pot did not win, but it's not just the famously notorious, it's everyone who holds out on Jesus, who lives treasonously against the rightful rule of the world, and the judgment begins with the household of God, verse 17.

[ 29 : 59 ] It's a phrase that's meant to take us to Ezekiel chapter 9 and Malachi chapter 3, where God began his purifying work in the temple. And as Peter says, Christians are the temple made up of living stones now, 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 4 and 5, we saw a couple of weeks ago, and after beginning with believers as a purifying fire, you know, not destroying, not condemning, but refining, it will then, this judgment, move out to non-believers, those who do not trust Jesus, as a condemning, consuming fire.

The thrust of what Peter is saying is this, if believers go through such agony in this world, what will it be like for the non-believer to meet God?

The Lord Jesus is already in the midst of the new temple, which is his people. We shouldn't be surprised that the refining has begun. A few things we need to note about this judgment.

First of all, Christ is, I'm not quite sure what that alarm is doing. Is that? I don't think it's us. Who knows? But having been justified and declared okay with God, right, the judgment of God has been robbed of its terror for believers whose sins have been judged at the cross.

We will not be judged to condemnation. Believers have already passed from death to life. we're safe in God's hands, guaranteed to receive mercy.

[ 31 : 39 ] In God's mercy, this side of the grave though, there's always the invitation now to submit to Jesus and receive his forgiveness, to receive his love now.

Now the treason can be forgiven. Now the rebellion can be forgiven. Now the hostility towards Christ can be forgiven. Now any sin you've done against the Lord Jesus and his people in this world can be forgiven.

Now is the time. And it may be today it's something you'd like to receive. Being convinced that if you would stand before the true and living God you would stand without hope and guilty but it's not too late.

Now is the day to come to faith in the Lord Jesus and so be forgiven. So you remember too also for those who believe in this room here all of us at one stage were facing the wrath of God but in his kindness and mercy he's called us to himself so we can say that we have been rescued from the shameful way of life so that we can say that we were now done with sin and if God didn't do that in us we'd be still lost and if he can do it in us he can do it in anyone he chooses to do it in and so brothers and sisters we have an alien hope a strange hope a certain hope that's to share in God's eternal glory which is the greatest gift that we could ever receive therefore verse 19 therefore let those who suffer according to

God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good we're not to blame God for suffering to hate God for it to shake our fist to God but we're to entrust our life to God that is to hand our life over to his keeping his sure and faithful keeping he's not asking us to do something he hasn't done himself for God in his son the Lord Jesus entrust himself to him who judges justly and that shouldn't be surprised that leads to moaning strange as it seems that should cause us to rejoice for it's a sure sign that we belong to the one who will bring us safely home so let's pray to him now our father in heaven you speak to us in your word and you tell us what to expect in this world and how to live in it please guard our hearts and our minds in our knowledge of

[ 35 : 44 ] Christ Jesus please keep our hearts and minds safe in knowing the gospel of the Lord Jesus that once we too like the rest of mankind were deserving of your wrath and yet you called us to yourself help us to be done with sin and help us to live lives which are strange in this world and father we pray even now for those in our midst who might not yet have followed Jesus please have mercy we pray repent and believe and be done with sin and know the forgiveness and joy that comes in knowing Christ we pray in Jesus name Amen