

Peter has written this letter to help believers being persecuted. He now summarizes much of what he has written with four final commands regarding our response to persecution and suffering.

1. **Expect persecution** (4:12).

- a. *What is the character of this persecution?* Literally, it is a “fiery trial among you to your testing”. The smelting of metals is used figuratively like the English word “crucible” for the work of God in our lives demonstrating our faith and helping us to mature.
- b. *Is Peter talking about difficult times in general or persecution for being a Christian? Why?* In this context Peter is specifically thinking of persecution for being a Christian as revealed in verses 14 and 16. Cf. Matthew 5:11. However, the principle does extend to other trials as expressed in James 1:2-3.
- c. *Why should we expect “fiery trials”?* (1) It is God’s intent to bring us to maturity and trials are one of His tools to this end. (2) Trials are not “some strange thing” because Jesus forewarned us that those who hate Him would hate His followers (John 15:20-21).

2. **Rejoice in suffering** (4:13-14).

- a. *Why would a lack of surprise be strongly contrasted with rejoicing?* A middle point of logic is presumed: don’t be surprised, since Jesus told us we will be treated like Him and should rejoice as we share His treatment.
- b. *Should we be happy about all suffering?* Not necessarily, but “to the degree you participate in (or share) the sufferings of Christ” and that trials produce maturity. Cf. Acts 16: 25 where Paul and Silas sang praises in prison after being wrongly beaten.
- c. *Why should we rejoice in suffering with Christ?* (1) We participate in a special fellowship with Christ and with others (v 13; cf. Mt 5:11-12). (2) We will share in His glory when we have suffered with Him (v. 13; cf. 5:1 and Romans 8:17-18). (3) “... the Spirit ... of God rests on us”, perhaps alluding to Isaiah 11:2, a reminder that we *share* the same Spirit and are empowered by the same Spirit that empowered the Messiah. (3) It produces good things in us like perseverance (Rom 5:3-4).

There are actually three imperatives in these verses, which I have combined into one thought.

3. **Suffer righteously without shame and glorify God** (4:15-18). The three individual imperatives are combined in this command.

- a. *Be sure we suffer for the right reason.* It should not be for sinful behavior, not even “meddling” (unwarranted attempt to oversee the affairs of others), but only for acting like a Christian should.
- b. *Those who suffer as Christians should not feel shame.* It might seem like we have done wrong when we suffer even for righteousness, but we should recognize that we are being identified with Christ. Praise God that we bear the name “Christian”.
- c. *A shameless, righteous response to suffering will culminate in glorifying God.*
A proper response and a proper understanding of what is happening should affect as well our attitude to the lost when we are undergoing suffering for Christ’s sake. (Consider the response of the Philippian jailor.) Judgment will one day come upon all people, but God is not sanctifying believers, judging sin in our lives and working holiness in us. The difficult statement, “if it is hard for the righteous to be saved...”, quotes Proverbs 11:31 in the LXX. Those who are righteous before God will still have difficulty in this world. If the righteous will go through hardship because of lesser spiritual enemies, how much more will sinners not escape from judgment, because they are enemies of God. Cf. Acts 14:22; 1 Cor 3:9-15.

4. **Entrust yourselves to God** (4:19).

- a. “Commit” (NIV) is better translated “entrust”. Peter calls us to place ourselves into God’s hands to care for us and to do what is right, particularly when suffering “according to the will of God.”
- b. God is described as “a faithful Creator”. The one to whom we entrust ourselves is faithful. He can be trusted. As the Creator we are reminded that He is all-powerful. He is fully capable of caring for us.
- c. The manner in which we entrust our souls to a faithful Creator is in doing what is right. NASB offers a more literal translation: “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right”. We demonstrate our trust in God by doing what is right, even in suffering, not retaliating but being “a little Christ”, i.e., a Christian.

It may be difficult for us to identify with the “fiery ordeal” especially compared to the persecution which others face. But we should be prepared for bad times and respond properly in the times of lesser persecution which we experience.

Expect persecution. Rejoice in suffering for Christ. Suffer righteously without shame to the glory of God. Entrust yourselves to God.