



The First Letter of Peter  
**Bible Study Session 18**  
**1 Peter 4:12-19**  
**“Understand Suffering”**



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**Greek NT**

12 Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ ξενίζεσθε τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν γινομένη ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος, 13 ἀλλὰ καθὸ κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν χαίρετε, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι. 14 εἰ ὀνειδίζεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται. 15 μὴ γάρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος· 16 εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦτῳ. 17 ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ' ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ; 18 καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβὴς καὶ ἀμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται; 19 ὥστε καὶ οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῶ κτίστη παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ.

**La Biblia**

**de las Américas**

12 Amados, no os sorprendáis del fuego de prueba que en medio de vosotros ha venido para probaros, como si alguna cosa extraña os estuviera aconteciendo; 13 antes bien, en la medida en que compartís los padecimientos de Cristo, regocijaos, para que también en la revelación de su gloria os regocijéis con gran alegría. 14 Si sois vituperados por el nombre de Cristo, dichosos sois, pues el Espíritu de gloria y de Dios reposa sobre vosotros. Ciertamente, por ellos El es blasfemado, pero por vosotros es glorificado. 15 Que de ninguna manera sufra alguno de vosotros como homicida, o ladrón, o malhechor, o por entrometido. 16 Pero si alguno sufre como cristiano, que no se avergüence, sino que como tal glorifique a Dios. 17 Porque es tiempo de que el juicio comience por la casa de Dios; y si comienza por nosotros primero, ¿cuál será el fin de los que no obedecen al evangelio de Dios? 18 Y SI EL JUSTO CON DIFICULTAD SE SALVA, ¿QUE SERA DEL IMPIO Y DEL PECADOR? 19 Por consiguiente, los que sufren conforme a la voluntad de Dios, encomienden sus almas al fiel Creador, haciendo el bien.

**NRSV**

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. 16 Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?" 19 Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

**NLT**

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 -- because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world. 14 Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God will come 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 wonderful name! 17 For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin first among God's own children. And if even we Christians must be judged, what terrible fate awaits those who have never believed God's Good News? 18 And "If the righteous are barely saved, what chance will the godless and sinners have?" 19 So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you.

## Quick Links to the Study

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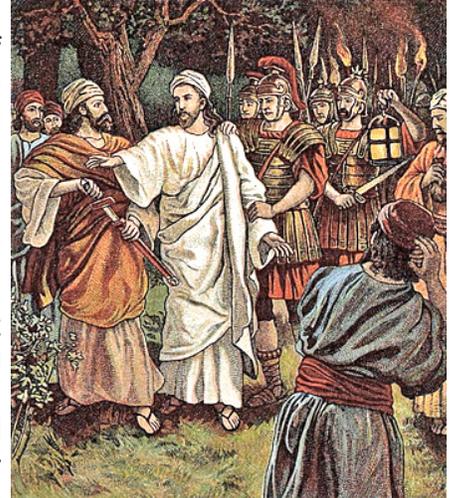
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### Introduction to Study.

Peter keeps on coming at us about being willing to suffer unjustly. Perhaps out of his own experiences he realized that this could be one of the hardest challenges to believers. He certainly learned about this from Christ who rebuked him in the garden when the temple soldiers came to arrest Jesus and Peter wanted to lead the defense charge to fight them: "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"<sup>1</sup> Christ saw beyond what Peter could see, the will and purposes of God in unjust suffering. Although it took Peter a while to learn to see the 'bigger picture' on things, he did discover how to do that under the leadership of God's Spirit. And so in writing to the believers in Anatolia almost three decades later, he presses them somewhat like Christ had pressed him that night in the garden.



Most of us today need to be pushed at this point as well. When faced with having to endure injustices, we want either to run or to fight. But our Lord will give us neither option. Instead, his word to us is, "Endure!" We can learn a lot from Peter's wise counsel to believers in this text.

### I. **Context and Background<sup>2</sup>**

Once more, the importance of the historical background and the literary aspects of the passage cannot be under emphasized. Failure at just this point with this particular text has contributed substantially to a false reading of the passage to imply the existence of intense, wide spread persecution being assumed by Peter here. This in turn has generated substantial debate over the dating of the letter. In the early modern era, this assumption often led to the conclusion that the generalized persecution of Christians toward the end of the Flavian dynasty in the late 80s to the end of the century was the earliest possible allusion in the passage. Many even contended that the reference to a 'fiery ordeal' was talking about the later persecution of Christians in the 130s. The clear implication of such linkages is that Peter could not have had anything to do with the writing of the letter, since he was martyred in the mid 60s.

The reaction from some to this denial of Petrine authorship has been to falsely counter with a contention that the persecution of Christians by Nero in Rome in the mid 60s actually was an empire wide persecution of Christians and thus was the point of Peter's reference. The falseness of this contention was clearly obvious on two accounts. First, ancient Roman and Greek documents are very clear that persecution of Christians by Nero was temporary and limited primarily to the city of Rome, and hardly extended beyond the city. Second, if Peter was referring to a moment of persecution that ultimately led to his own death, the dating of the letter would have to be so close to the time of his execution by Nero that no time would be possible for a second letter to have been written by him. Clearly the tone of Second Peter is similar to that of Second Timothy by Paul: both apostles are facing immanent death and are very aware of it. But no such tone is present in First Peter.

Thus identifying the historical setting for Peter's words in 4:12-19 takes on greater importance. Understanding the literary aspects of the text assign us at this very point of historical concern, as the exegesis below will attempt to illustrate.

<sup>1</sup>See John 18:1-12 with the Synoptic parallels in Matthew 26:45-57 // Mark 14:41-50 // Luke 22:47-54.

<sup>2</sup>Serious study of the Bible requires careful analysis of the background and setting of the scripture passage. Failure to do this leads to interpretive garbage and possibly to heresy. Detailed study of the background doesn't always answer all the questions, but it certainly gets us further along toward correct understanding of both the historical and contemporary meanings of a text. This serious examination of both the historical and literary background of every passage will be presented in summary form with each of the studies.

## a. Historical

**External History.** In the UBS 4th revised edition Greek New Testament only two listings of variant readings of the text are presented. Both of these occur in verse fourteen.

The rather unusual Greek construction τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα (literally, ‘the of the glory and the of God Spirit’) caused some problems for copyists. A wide range of alternative readings of the text shows up both in ancient copies of the Greek text and the early translations of the Greek into Latin, Syriac, Coptic and other languages. Three alternative patterns dominate the variations. First, a number of ancient translations<sup>3</sup> simply translate from an understanding of the text in Greek to be τὸ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα, “the of the glory of God Spirit.” This pushes the idea into an even more unusual expression, while trying to simplify the wording of the text. Second, τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ δυνάμεως τοῦ θεοῦ ὄνομα καὶ καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα, “the name of the God of glory and power and the Spirit of God.” But these changes come very late in the copying process.<sup>4</sup> Third, τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα is modified to read τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα, “the of the glory and power and the of God Spirit,” with some variations.<sup>5</sup> The earliest and most important manuscripts apart from Sinaiticus (κ) support the text reading, although exactly how it should be translated is not that clear.<sup>6</sup>

Also in verse fourteen a variation of wording surfaces at the point of the verb ἀναπαύεται, “rests upon.” Here five different trajectories of expression are found in the copies of the text. First, ἀναπαύεται is replaced with ἐπαναπαύεται, a more intense expression of the same idea, ‘rests upon.’<sup>7</sup> Second, ἀναπαύεται, present tense is replaced by ἀναπέπαυται, perfect tense, “has come to rest upon.”<sup>8</sup> Third, alternatives one and two are combined with ἐπαναπέπαυται, perfect tense of compound verb, “has come indeed to rest upon.”<sup>9</sup> Fourth, an extension of the text shows up: ἀναπαύεται· κατὰ μὲν αὐτοὺς βλασφημεῖται, κατὰ δὲ ὑμᾶς δοξάζεται, “rests upon, on the one hand it is blasphemed by them but glorified by you.” The issue of the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit is injected into the text with clear assertion that the persecutors of these believers are who are doing it.<sup>10</sup> Fifth, a variation of the fourth pattern with the same essential point shows up in a lectionary manuscript: ἀναπέπαυται· κατὰ μὲν αὐτοὺς βλασφημεῖται καὶ ὀνειδιζόμενον φέρει, κατὰ δὲ ὑμᾶς δοξάζεται, “rests upon, on the one hand it is blasphemed by them and endures being reviled, but on the other hand is glorified by you.”<sup>11</sup> The first three patterns of copying simply attempt to strengthen the wording of the text, but the last two are trying to inject the issue of blaspheming the Holy Spirit into the words of Peter, but these reflect later theological modification of the words of Peter and clearly were not a part of the original wording of the text.

The text apparatus of the Nestle-Aland 27th revised edition of the Greek New Testament includes ten additional places of variations beyond the two mentioned above. As an example, P<sup>72</sup> inserts the preposition ἐπὶ in the phrase τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει so that the text reads ἐπὶ τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει.... This does not alter the meaning; instead, it seeks to make explicit what is already implicit: the case function of τῇ πυρώσει as a locative of sphere or dative of place usage. The translation remains the same either with or without the stated preposition ἐπὶ. These variations represent later efforts to a) update the language to the text to more current spellings and style, b) make the text clearer for current readers, and / or c) failure to correctly copy one word

<sup>3</sup>it<sup>ar, t</sup> vg<sup>ww, st</sup> (syr<sup>p</sup>) geo.

<sup>4</sup>1292 1505 1611 1852 2138 syr<sup>h</sup> (arm)

<sup>5</sup>(κ\* τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) (κ<sup>2</sup> τῆς δυνάμεως) A 33 81 322 323 436 945 1067 1175 1241 1243 1409 1735 1739 1881 2298 2344 2464 Byz<sup>pt</sup> [P] Lect it<sup>z</sup> (vg<sup>cl</sup>) vg<sup>mss</sup> cop<sup>bo</sup> slav Athanasius Theodoret; (cop<sup>sa</sup> Didymus<sup>dub</sup>; Cyprian omit καὶ τὸ)

<sup>6</sup>“The reading of the text is supported by diverse witnesses. However, a considerable number of witnesses, some of them early, read καὶ δυνάμεως (and of power) after the noun δόξης. Since the additions exist in several different forms, the longer readings appear to be homiletic additions to the original text. It is not entirely clear how the reading in the text is to be understood and translated. Compare ‘the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God’ (NRSV); ‘the Spirit of glory and of God’ (NAB); ‘the Spirit of God, the Spirit of glory’ (NJB); and ‘the Spirit of God in all his glory’ (REB). Elliott (1 Peter, p. 782) writes, ‘since both of glory and of God qualify Spirit, this pleonastic construction can also be rendered more smoothly as the divine Spirit of glory.’” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 489.]

<sup>7</sup>A 81 1243 1292 1735 1852 2138

<sup>8</sup>33 945 1175 1241 1739<sup>ext</sup> 1881 2344 2464 l596 Didymus<sup>dub</sup> Cyril

<sup>9</sup>P<sup>72</sup> κ<sup>2</sup>. This kind of pattern is very common when copyists are looking at two different readings of a text and can’t decide which one is more accurate. So they merely incorporate both into their copy.

<sup>10</sup>(Ψ 1505 1611 ἐπαναπαύεται) 2298 Byz [K L P] l 590 (Lect ἀναπέπαυται) it<sup>ar, q, t, z</sup> vg<sup>ww</sup> syr<sup>h</sup> with \* cop<sup>sa</sup>, (bo<sup>ms</sup>) slav Cyprian.

<sup>11</sup>l 921

after the other and thus skipping over a word, or a line of text visually in the copying process.

Again as we have consistently noted, over the centuries of thousands of people copying the text, it has remained stable and without serious variation of wording. Thus we can confidently interpret this text as the original words of Peter and Silas.

**Internal History.** The central historical issue relates to what is meant by τῆ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει, “the fiery ordeal among you.” The noun πύρωσις is used only three times in the New Testament, with the other two instances in Rev. 18:9 and 18:18 in reference to the predicted destruction of Babylon (Rome) at the last day: τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς, “the smoke of her burning.”<sup>12</sup> More important, however, is the use of the noun form πῦρ in 1:6-7,

6 ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον [ἐστίν] λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις **πειρασμοῖς**, 7 ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσοῦ τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ **πυρὸς** δὲ δοκιμαζομένου, εὐρεθῆ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various **trials**, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by **fire**—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

The language and theme emphasis of 1:6-7 and 4:12-13 are very close to one another, and both presuppose the same situation.<sup>13</sup> The first passage raises the inevitability of such ‘testings’ by fire while the second passage assumes their occurrence. The use of the image of fire in connection to persecution does not signal the use of literal fire as a means of persecution, such as Nero used on Christians in Rome in the mid-60s when he made human torches out of many of them. In both passages, the image of fire is figurative, not literal. In the first text, the illustration of refining gold through a process of burning is the metaphor for believers suffering persecution that could be inflicted on them using any kind of means. In the second text, the figurative use of fire calls attention to any kind of persecution that inflicts pain like putting a burning torch to the skin would cause pain. Peter’s image in 4:12 simply designates any type of unjust suffering that would produce severe pain in the individual.

Consequently neither 1:6-7 nor 4:12-13 can be correctly interpreted to allude to Nero’s persecution nor the later systematic persecution of Christians either by emperor Domitian (51 - 96 AD) nor by Trajan (53-117 AD) or Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD). Both passages allude to individual incidents of suffering unjustly from non-believers, who ever they might have been. Therefore, no legitimate use of 4:12-19 for the dating of the letter is possible, contrary to the attempts of some over the years.

## b. Literary

**Literary Form (Genre).** The literary patterns in vv. 12-19 do not follow any specific literary genre, apart from verse eighteen which contains a quote from Proverbs 11:31 (LXX).

<sup>12</sup>πύρωσις, εὖς, ἦ (πυρῶ; Aristot., Theophr. et al.; PGM 2, 110; Am 4:9; TestSol 18:29 P; TestJud 16:1; Just., D. 116, 2)

1. **process of burning, burning** (Jos., Ant. 1, 203) lit. in pass. sense τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς **Rv 18:9, 18.**

2. **an intense degree of some painful occurrence or experience, burning ordeal** fig. ext. of ἡ ἢ π. τῆς δοκιμασίας the fiery test D 16:5. π. πρὸς πειρασμὸν γινομένη *fiery ordeal to test you* **1 Pt 4:12** (cp. the πύρωσις for testing metals Pr 27:21). In this sense the focus is on degree of intensity of the trial, but a component of suffering is indicated by the context, and some would prefer to render: severe suffering.—DELG s.v. πῦρ. M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 900.]

<sup>13</sup>“The repetition of the same word in 1:6 (*peirasmōis*) is a further indication of the close relation of these two passages. The terminological and thematic similarities between 4:12-13 and 1:6-7 indicate the presupposition of a similar situation, so that 4:12 cannot be said to introduce a new, actual crisis, even though 1:6-7 refers to the potentiality of suffering and 4:12-13 to its actuality. Beare’s contention to the contrary (1970, 26-27, 188-93) is now rejected by virtually all subsequent commentators. Both passages and their similar terms (*pyrōsis/pyr*, *peirasmōs/dokimazō*) qualify the nature of innocent suffering and indicate its constructive functions. 1 Peter 4:12-19 differs from 1:6-7 only in describing more fully the circumstances of this suffering and the Christian behavior required. Given the traditional nature of this language and the absence of any accompanying mention of organized persecution, there is no reason for seeing in *peirasmōs* any reference to a ‘persecution’ initiated by Rome or *pyrōsis* as an allusion to Nero’s execution of the Christians of Rome by fire (*pyr*) as arsonists (against Beare 1970, 190; Leaney 1967, 65; and others). The terminology and images employed here and in 1:6-7 are instead traditional means<sup>570</sup> for depicting the tribulations and testing of God’s people. The divine test of faith (trust in God and commitment to Jesus Christ) through suffering proves faith’s genuineness and durability.” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 773.]

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1 Peter 4:12-19  
Literary Function



LXX: εἰ ὁ μὲν δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβῆς καὶ ἀμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται;

1 Peter: καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβῆς καὶ ἀμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται;

Peter opts to closely use the rather free Greek translation of the original Hebrew text that applied to Jews (righteous and unrighteous) with a Christian re-application of the Old Testament text. And the quote serves to support a similar contention stated in the preceding verse seventeen. Thus the use of Proverbs 11:31 is as a ‘scripture proof’ but without an introductory signal of quoting the OT text. Both verses draw a strong contrast between Christians and non-Christians in terms of divine judgment, using the traditional Jewish “lessor to greater” principle of analysis: if judgment is difficult for the righteous, it will be much more difficult for the unrighteous.

**Literary Context.** The literary function of 4:12-19 has been understood in different ways by scholars. Clearly it forms a self-contained unit of text, and general agreement exists at this point. The vocative form in verse 12 Ἀγαπητοί, “beloved,” signals the beginning of a new topic. And the conclusion introduced by ὥστε, “so then,” signals a climatic ending of the pericope. The unclear issue then revolves around the role of the passage itself to the rest of the letter, and the body section of the letter in particular. The language and theme expression in the passage echo materials presented in 1:6 - 4:6.<sup>14</sup> Older approaches recognized this but insisted that it signaled a later, separate source for the material in 4:12 - 5:11 dealing with a more urgent, different situation than was treated in

the first part of the letter. But this understanding has largely been rejected by more recent scholarship on First Peter. Clearly the section of 4:12-5:11 continues the emphasis on unjust suffering, by presupposing the same situation. But it introduces new aspects to the discussion not found earlier in the letter. Additionally, 4:12-19 sets up the next unit of 5:1-11. Michaels proposes an interesting image to describe the role: interlocking. That is, 4:7-11 anticipates 4:12-5:11 and 4:12-19 summarizes 2:11-4:11. There is truth in this analogy, although it does not fully explain everything that is taking place literarily here.

**Literary Structure.**

The block diagram below highlights the organization of ideas in this text through visual presentation of **primary** and secondary concepts.

4.12 Beloved,

among you

58 **don't be shocked at the fiery ordeal**

for testing

coming at you

as though a strange thing were happening to you

4.13 but

just as you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ,

59 **rejoice,**

<sup>14c</sup>The structure of his letter at this point is best described as interlocking: if 4:7–11 looks ahead, anticipating the themes of 4:12–5:11, 4:12–19 pauses to look back, resuming for one last time the themes of 2:11–4:6. These are the themes of how to respond to one’s enemies and how to face hostility and the prospect of suffering. At the start (vv 12–13) the section looks even farther back, to the cryptic references to ‘various ordeals,’ to being ‘tested by fire,’ and to final ‘joy’ in 1:6–8. Now at last Peter describes in fuller, although rather similar language, what he had in mind there. The rhetoric is reminiscent of 1:6–8, but the actual situation to which it refers is simply the accumulation of the grievances and social pressures either sketched or hinted at throughout 2:11–4:6.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 258.]

also  
 at the revelation of His glory  
 in order that...you may have occasion to rejoice  
 while being overjoyed.

4.14 If you are being reviled  
 because of the name of Christ,  
 60 **(you are) blessed,**  
 because the Spirit of His Glory and of God rests upon you.

4.15 **For**  
 61 **let no one of you suffer**  
 as a murderer,  
 or  
 a thief  
 or  
 a criminal  
 nor  
 as a mischief maker;

4.16 but  
 if as a Christian,  
 62 **let him not be ashamed,**  
 but  
 63 **let him praise God,**  
 because of this name.

4.17 **Because**  
 64 **the time (is)**  
 for judgment to begin  
 starting with the house of God;  
 and  
 if first with us,  
 65 **what is the outcome**  
 of those disobeying the Gospel of God?

4.18 And  
 if the righteous is hardly saved,  
 66 **how will the impious and sinner show up?**

4.19 Consequently  
 also  
 67 **let those suffering...entrust their lives to a faithful Creator**  
 according to the will of God  
 in doing good.

The text is organized around two central groups of ideas. In statements 58-60, the readers are encouraged to take a positive stance toward unjust suffering. The negative (#58) / positive (#59) admonitions to rejoicing are affirmed by the pronouncement of blessing in the form of a beatitude (#60).

In the second segment (#s 61-67), two sets of reasons are given as support and amplification of the first segment. The first set of reasons in #s 61-63 admonish believers to not suffer for improper conduct (#61), but for right conduct and as a Christian we are not to be ashamed (#62) but to praise God (# 63). The negative (#62) / positive (#63) pair follow a pattern similar to those in #s 58 and 59.

The second set of reasons in #s 64-67 are presented by ὅτι rather than by γάρ as with the first set in #s 61-63. This unusual use of the subordinate conjunction ὅτι as a coordinate conjunction signals the secondary role of this set of reasons. The first set introduced by γάρ is more important, but the second set maintains importance, just not quite at the same level.

The content of the four affirmations in #s 64 - 65 centers on eschatological judgment. Divine judgment

starts with the 'house of God' and thus casts into serious question the possibility of those rejecting the God successfully getting through divine judgement. The point is repeated with different words in # 66. The text ends with drawing the conclusion (# 67) that those suffering unjustly should entrust themselves to God as a dependable Creator while continuing to do good.

The theme of this passage is not distinct from the emphasis on unjust suffering in 3:13 - 5:11. But the language and grammatical patterns do shift considerably from the style of writing thus far in the letter.

## II. Message

In this passage, Peter approaches the subject of unjust suffering with an appeal for believers to understand what is genuinely happening beyond the merely human perspective. That understanding should lead to joy and rejoicing even in the midst of the suffering. Here is the challenge to us in the modern western world. Understanding unjust suffering is not just assessing the actions of evil people in their treatment of us as measured against the standards of either governmental law and principles of morality, or even a combination of both. The modern western quest for understanding is usually seeking some sense of fairness or equity. Is God playing fair with us in allowing this to happen? Is He really a God of justice, if He can let evil people treat His children so wrongly? On and on we usually go, trying somehow to put God on the spot in terms of His character and integrity.

But Peter reflects early Christianity's very different way of handling such matters. It's not why God allows such things to happen. They understood clearly that life in an evil world is full of injustices. So rather than blaming God for evil, they opted to probe the experience of unjust suffering to see how God was working in their behalf in the midst of the suffering. If they could understand injustices from God's viewpoint, how much better they would be able to successfully manage the suffering of unjust treatment from others. We could learn a lot from them!

### a. Suffer unjustly with rejoicing, vv. 12-14

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

12 Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ ξενίζεσθε τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν γινομένη ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος, 13 ἀλλὰ καθὼς κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν χαίρετε, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι. 14 εἰ ὄνειδίζεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται.

#### Notes:

What we encounter here is a couple of linked admonitions (do not .... / do ....) followed by a beatitude that invokes God's blessings on unjust suffering. The two literary forms of antithetical parallelism and beatitude become Peter's vehicles of conveying the proper Christian approach to unjust suffering.

**Antithetical parallel, vv. 12-13.** This first sentence contains two main clauses with the negative / positive admonitions balancing one another in antithetical parallelism to each other. Such devices in the ancient world functioned so that the second line re-enforced the point of the first line by stating its opposite. Thus Peter's point that believers should not be shocked by unjust suffering is underscored by the opposite responsibility to rejoice in unjust suffering. The conjunction ἀλλὰ emphasizes the strong contrast between these two points.

**The negative command:** μὴ ξενίζεσθε τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν γινομένη ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος. This admonition to not be surprised echoes the earlier admonition in 3:14b, τὸν δὲ φόβον αὐτῶν μὴ φοβηθῆτε μηδὲ παραχθῆτε (**Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated**).<sup>15</sup> Even more, a play off the verb ξενίζω<sup>16</sup> (ξένος, strange) exists between the admonition here and the statement in 4:4: ἐν ᾧ ξενίζονται

<sup>15</sup>The present prohibitive imperative Greek verb μὴ ξενίζεσθε carries with it the sense of "stop being shocked."

<sup>16</sup>**2. to cause a strong psychological reaction through introduction of someth. new or strange, astonish, surprise** (Polyb. 3, 114, 4; Diod S 12, 53, 3; Jos., Ant. 1, 45) ξενίζοντά τινα *astounding things* Ac 17:20.—Pass. *be surprised, wonder* (Polyb.; M. Ant. 8, 15; PStras 35, 6; Pland 20, 1; Ath., R. 16 p. 67, 9) w. dat. of the thing causing surprise (Polyb. 1, 23, 5; 3, 68, 9) μὴ ξενίζεσθε τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει *do not be surprised (upset, ESelwyn, 1 Pt 4:46, 212) at the fiery ordeal among you 1 Pt 4:12; v.l. ἐπὶ τῇ κτλ.* (corresponding to Polyb. 2, 27, 4; UPZ 146, 4; 6 [II B.C.]; Jos., Ant. 1, 35). Also ἐν τινι vs. 4 (B-D-F §196; s. Rob. 532). Abs. 2 Cl 17:5.—M-M. TW. Spicq." [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 684.]

μὴ συντρεχόντων ὑμῶν εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς ἀσωτίας ἀνάχυσιν (**They are surprised** that you no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation). Their pagan neighbors were shocked that these new Christians would not join them in an immoral lifestyle any longer. Now the new believers should not be shocked by the opposition they are facing by living true to Christ.<sup>17</sup> To the Jewish Christians in the congregations, facing opposition would not have seemed so unusual, since as Diaspora Jews they had faced hostility from non-Jewish neighbors for a couple or so centuries. But to the Gentile converts in the churches, to be faced with such intense hostility could well have seemed shocking, since they had not encountered this before.<sup>18</sup>

The suffering these first readers were experiencing is described as τῆ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν γινομένη ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος (**at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you**). It is first τῆ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει, “the fiery ordeal.”<sup>19</sup> The persecution was like having to walk through an intense fire. It also was πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν (**to test you**). The suffering was designed to establish the genuineness of the faith commitment of these believers.<sup>20</sup> The image put before us here is the same as the earlier one in 1:6-7,

6 ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις **πειρασμοῖς**, 7 ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσοῦ τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου **διὰ πυρὸς** δὲ δοκιμαζομένου εὐρεθῆ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various **trials**, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith — being more precious than gold that, though perishable, **is tested by fire** — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Believers should face their sufferings as an opportunity to demonstrate that their faith is real and made of deep conviction. Additionally these sufferings were γινομένη, “**happening**.” They were not theoretical nor remote

<sup>17c</sup>Although he does not say so explicitly, it is evident from the reference in v 13 to ‘the sufferings of Christ,’ and from the allusion in v 14 to Jesus’ beatitude on those ridiculed for his sake, that the words and the example of Jesus are the reasons Peter believes a ‘fiery ordeal’ should come as no surprise. If Jesus himself suffered and predicted suffering for his followers, they have no reason to think it strange when his experiences are repeated and his predictions fulfilled (cf. Matt 10:24–25; Luke 6:40; John 13:16; 15:18–21; 16:1–4; 1 John 3:13). Within 1 Peter itself, the inevitability of suffering was intimated already in the εἰ δέον, ‘must’ or ‘by necessity,’ of 1:6, based possibly on the conspicuous use of δεῖ, ‘it is necessary,’ in the Jesus tradition (see Comment on εἰ δέον in 1:6).” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 260.]

<sup>18c</sup>Unlike the Jews who had for generations been a foreign and culturally distinct minority in the diaspora (and suffered as all such minorities suffer) and since the persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 1 and 2 Maccabees) had had a developed theology of suffering and martyrdom, these Gentile converts had no experience of being a cultural minority. Before their conversion they were perfectly at home in their city. And instead of rebelling against God they had accepted the gospel message. But now they were experiencing cultural isolation and personal hostility, not what they might have expected as the blessing of God. Well might they have wondered if something had not gone wrong. Thus our author reassures them: persecution is not something ‘strange’ or foreign to their existence as Christians.<sup>1</sup> What is happening is right in line with Christ’s predictions (Matt. 5:11–12; 10:34; Mark 13:9–13; John 15:18–20).” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 164.]

<sup>19c</sup>πύρωσις, ‘fiery ordeal,’ is used of Sodom’s destruction in Josephus, *Ant.* 1.203, and of the eschatological destruction of evil ‘Babylon’ by fire in Rev 18:9, 18. The latter parallel may be significant in view of Peter’s own claim in 5:13 to be writing from ‘Babylon.’ πύρωσις is also eschatological in Did. 16:5: ‘Then the human creation shall come to the fiery ordeal for testing (εἰς τὴν πύρωσιν τῆς δοκιμασίας), and many shall be offended and be lost, but those who endure in their faith shall be saved by the curse itself.’ In 1 Peter, however, the present participle γινομένη, ‘breaking out,’ locates the ‘fiery ordeal’ in the contemporary situation of the writer and his readers. Although a present participle can have a future reference in 1 Peter (cf. 1:13), the contrast in v 13 between present suffering and future rejoicing makes it clear that a future meaning is not intended in v 12.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 260.]

<sup>20c</sup>The term *pyrōsis* (‘fiery ordeal’) is related linguistically to *pyr*, ‘fire,’ and has a range of meanings in the Bible and extrabiblical literature,<sup>563</sup> the most relevant of which is the ‘fiery process’ by which metal ore is separated from dross, freed of its impurities and refined; see Prov 27:21, ‘the fiery ordeal is the test of silver and gold’ (*dokimion argyrōi kai chrysōi pyrōsis*); Did. 16:5, ‘the fiery ordeal of testing’ (*hē pyrōsis tēs dokimasias*). Its related verb, *pyrōō*, is often used in this same sense of ‘testing, refining by fire.’<sup>564</sup> Since our author has already used this metaphor in 1:6–7 in speaking of faith as more precious than ‘perishable gold tested by fire,’ this sense of *pyrōsis* is clearly implied here as well. In both passages the analogy of a metallurgical process is used to provide a positive interpretation of innocent suffering (*pathēmasin*, v 13; cf. *lypēthentes*, 1:6) as a divine testing of faith’s constancy. In the context of this letter, fiery ordeal thus serves as a graphic comprehensive image for all of the hostility, slander, and abuse directed against the faithful and the suffering it has caused.” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 771-72.]

possibilities. Rather, the believers were experiencing this suffering as Peter dictated this letter to Silas. Finally, this suffering was not to be regarded ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος, “as though something strange were happening to you.” Always when persecution comes the very human response is to question why: “Why is God letting this happen to me?” Peter’s repeated use of the example of Christ’s suffering unjustly in chapters two and three have clearly established that since such happened to Christ, His followers should expect it to happen to them as well. Thus no surprise, no shock should come to believers.

**The positive command:** ἀλλὰ καθὼ κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν χαίρετε, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι. The core admonition here is simply χαίρετε, “be rejoicing.”<sup>21</sup> The sense of joy is to be ongoing, as is expressed by the present tense imperative verb.

The admonition has two qualifications. *First*, it is καθὼ κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν. That is, rejoicing is appropriate only to the extent that one’s sufferings are a participation in the sufferings of Christ. Persecution for one’s religious faith must be the nature of the suffering. What Peter is indicating here is that no blank check for any kind of suffering should prompt rejoicing. It is only by our suffering having a profound connection to what Christ suffered that we can rejoice. Why? Only that kind of suffering has a positive future, and can claim the blessing of God. When we make God’s will primary as did Christ, the suffering that comes from it identifies our suffering with that of Christ. *Second*, the outcome of our suffering will be ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι. When the divine Presence is disclosed in the second coming of Christ we will have an unbelievable occasion for rejoicing. The combining of verb and participle here, χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι, heightens the level of joy on that eschatological day. One hears echoes of Luke 6:23

<sup>21c</sup>χαίρω mid. by-form χαίρεται TestAbr s. below; impf. ἔχαιρον; fut. χαρήσομαι (B-D-F §77; Mlt-H. 264); 2 aor. pass. ἐχάρην (Hom.+).

**1. to be in a state of happiness and well-being, rejoice, be glad** opp. κλαίειν **J 16:20; Ro 12:15ab** (Damasc., Vi. Isid. 284 χαρίεις πρὸς τοὺς χαριέντας); **1 Cor 7:30ab**; Hv 3, 3, 2. Opp. λύπην ἔχειν **J 16:22**. W. ἀγαλλιᾶσθαι (Hab 3:18; TestJob 43:15; ParJer 6:20; cp. TestAbr A 11 p. 89, 17 [Stone p. 26]) **Mt 5:12; 1 Pt 4:13b**; cp. **Rv 19:7**; GJs 17:2. W. εὐφραίνεσθαι (Jo 2:23 al. in LXX) **Lk 15:32; Rv 11:10**. W. σκιρτᾶν **Lk 6:23**. W. acc. of inner obj. (B-D-F §153, 1; Rob. 477) χ. χαρὰν μεγάλην *be very glad* (Jon 4:6; JosAs 3:4 al.) **Mt 2:10**. τῇ χαρᾷ ἧ (by attraction for ἦν) χαίρομεν **1 Th 3:9**. Also χαρᾷ χ., which prob. betrays the infl. of the OT (Is 66:10), **J 3:29** (B-D-F §198, 6; Rob. 531; 550). The ptc. is used w. other verbs *with joy, gladly* (Appian, Bell. Civ. 4, 40 §169 ἄπιθι χαίρων; 3 Km 8:66; Eutecnius 4 p. 43, 7 ἄπεισι χαίρουσα; Laud. Therap. 12 χαίρων ἐστέλλετο) ὑπεδέξατο αὐτον χαίρων **Lk 19:6**; cp. vs. **37; 15:5; Ac 5:41; 8:39**.—The obj. of or reason for the joy is denoted in var. ways: w. simple dat. τοῖς τὰ πολλὰ λέγουσιν those who are (merely) garrulous Papias (2:3) (Aristonous 1, 45 [p. 164 Coll. Alex.]; Just., A I, 5, 3 al.; Orig., C. Cels. 8, 69, 20; s. also below on **Ro 12:12**) or prep. χαίρειν ἐπὶ τινι *rejoice over someone or someth.* (Soph. et al.; X., Cyr. 8, 4, 12, Mem. 2, 6, 35; Pla., Leg. 5, 729d; Diod S 1, 25, 2; Plut., Mor. 87e; 1088e; BGU 531 I, 4 [I A.D.]; POxy 41, 17; Tob 13:15ab; Pr 2:14; 24:19; Bar 4:33; JosAs 4:4; Jos., Ant. 1, 294; 3, 32; Ar. 15, 7; Just., D. 28, 4; Iren. 1, 16, 3 [Harv I 163, 9]) **Mt 18:13; Lk 1:14; 13:17; Ac 15:31; Ro 16:19; 1 Cor 13:6; 16:17; 2 Cor 7:13; Rv 11:10**; Hs 5, 2, 5 and 11; 8, 1, 16; 8, 5, 1 and 6; Dg 11:5. Also διά w. acc. (Appian, Bell. Civ. 4, 102 §428; EpArist 42) **J 3:29**; 11:15 the ὅτι-clause gives the reason, and δι’ ὑμᾶς is *for your sakes = in your interest*; cp. **1 Th 3:9**. ἐν τινι (Soph., Trach. 1118; Pla., Rep. 10, 603c; En 104:13) Hs 1:11. ἐν τούτῳ *over that Phil 1:18a* (for other functions of ἐν s. below). περί τινας in someth. (Pla., Ep. 2, 310e.—περί πλοῦτον Did., Gen. 150, 8) 1 Cl 65:1. ἵνα μὴ λύπην σχῶ ἀφ’ ὧν ἔδει με χαίρειν (either ἀπὸ τούτων ἀφ’ ὧν or ἀπὸ τούτων οἷς) **2 Cor 2:3**. The reason or object is given by ὅτι (Lucian, Charon 17; Ex 4:31; Just., A II, 2, 7) **Lk 10:20b; J 11:15** (s. above); **14:28; 2 Cor 7:9, 16; Phil 4:10; 2J 4**. χ. ἐν τούτῳ ὅτι **Lk 10:20a**. χ. ὅταν **2 Cor 13:9**. χ. ... γάρ **Phil 1:18b (19)**. The reason or obj. is expressed by a ptc. (X., Cyr. 1, 5, 12; Pla., Rep. 5, 458a; Dio Chrys. 22 [39], 1 al.; PGM 4, 1212 χαίρεις τοὺς σοὺς σφύζων; 1611; Just., D. 114, 4): ἰδόντες τὸν ἀστέρα ἐχάρησαν **Mt 2:10**; cp. **Lk 23:8; J 20:20; Ac 11:23; Phil 2:28**; Hv 3, 12, 3. ἀκούσαντες ἐχάρησαν *they were delighted by what they heard Mk 14:11*; cp. **Ac 13:48**; Hv 3, 3, 2.—1 Cl 33:7; Dg 5:16. λαβόντες τὰ ἐδέμματα ἐχάρησαν Hs 5, 2, 10. W. gen. and ptc. (as Just., D. 85, 6) 9, 11, 7. If χαίρειν is also in the ptc., καὶ comes betw. the two participles: χαίρων καὶ βλέπων (and) *it is with joy that I see Col 2:5*. ἐχάρην ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ μαρτυρούντων *I was glad when some fellow-Christians came and testified 3J 3*.—τῇ ἐλπίδι χαίρ. **Ro 12:12** is not ‘rejoice over the hope’ (the dat. stands in this mng. X., Mem. 1, 5, 4; Theopompus [IV B.C.]: 115 Fgm. 114 Jac.; Epict., App. D, 3 [p. 479 Sch.] ἀρετῇ χ.; Iambl., Vi. Pyth. 28, 137 οἷς ὁ θεὸς χ.; Pr 17:19), but rather *rejoice in hope or filled with hope* (B-D-F §196). τὸ ἐφ’ ὑμῖν χαίρω as far as you are concerned, I am glad **Ro 16:19** v.l. In the majority of cases in our lit. ἐν does not introduce the cause of the joy (s. above): χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν *I rejoice in the midst of* (though *because of* is also poss.) *(the) suffering(s) Col 1:24* (the Engl. ‘in’ conveys both ideas). χαίρ. ἐν κυρίῳ **Phil 3:1; 4:4a, 10** (the imperatives in **3:1; 4:4ab** are transl. *good-bye* [so Hom. et al.] by Goodsp., s. Probs. 174f; this would class them under 2a below). Abs. **Lk 22:5; J 4:36; 8:56** (EbNestle, Abraham Rejoiced: ET 20, 1909, 477; JMoulton, ‘Abraham Rejoiced’: ibid. 523–28); **2 Cor 6:10; 7:7; 13:11; Phil 2:17f; 4:4b** (s. Goodsp. above); **1 Th 5:16; 1 Pt 4:13a**; cp. **13b**; GPt 6:23; Hv 3, 3, 3f; Hs 1:11; 5, 3, 3; GJs 16:3.—On the rare mid. χαίρομενος (TestAbr A 11 p. 89, 21 [Stone p. 26] χαίρεται καὶ ἀγάλλεται) **Ac 3:8** D, s. Mlt. 161 w. note 1; B-D-F §307.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1074-75.]

in this: **χάρητε** ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ **σκιρτήσατε**, ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (**Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven**). The passive voice verb *χαρήτε* underscores a dramatic difference between the ‘then’ and ‘now’ experiences of joy. In the present suffering believers must reach deep down inside their faith in order to rejoice. But in the eschatological joy of the Second Coming the circumstances of God’s clear and complete victory over evil and evil people prompts much greater rejoicing (cf. 1:7). The believer then realizes experientially what his faith has told him all along: enduring unjust suffering with joy rather than shock was indeed the right approach.

Most Christians in the western world would have more in common with the Gentile believers in ancient Anatolia than with the Jewish Christians. We have seldom experienced real hostility to us simply because we are committed Christians. We sometimes talk about hostility in terms of verbal sarcasm and perhaps job penalties because we don’t “run with the crowd” at the office or elsewhere. But Peter was writing to believers facing real persecution in terms of legal actions taken against them, confiscation of property, imprisonment, and even execution, among a variety of hostile actions. Should such be thrown at us, shock and bewilderment would be the most common response, simply because we haven’t prepared ourselves for such. Some believers in ethnic minority groups with a history of discrimination against them would be better able to cope than the rest of us.

But the real challenge is not in just avoiding shock but in finding joy in the face of such persecution. Some religious cult groups such as “Christian Science” offer phoney solutions that claim that material pain is not real, just dismiss it by mind control over the body. This has greater affinity with many of the Eastern religions that stress mind over matter. There is nothing Christian in any of this, and it is severely contradicted by the biblical stance of Peter in line with Jesus and the other apostles. In the Christian approach, there is no denial of the very real pain and suffering experienced in religious persecution. These are real and they hurt bad. But in the midst of them the believer, by reaching deep down into his having entrusted his life to Christ, finds joy through realizing that this experience is bonding him/her ever so closely to the Lord in His sufferings. Out of that union with Christ will come an unbelievable eschatological joy at the return of Christ, since complete vindication of taking this approach will be experienced. This is where our focus should be.

**Beatitude, v. 14.** The second device Peter used to encourage joy in suffering is a beatitude. The ancient Jewish beatitude was the invoking of God’s blessing upon an individual who met certain conditions. Already Peter has used this device in his previous discussion of unjust suffering in 3:14. The beatitude here in 4:14 is a fuller expression of the form with all the core elements of a beatitude of Jesus:

**4.14** εἰ **ὀνειδίζεσθε** ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, **μακάριοι**, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται.

If you **are reviled** for the name of Christ, **you are blessed**, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

**3.14** εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε διὰ δικαιοσύνην, **μακάριοι**,

Even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are **blessed**.

**Luke 6:22**, **μακάριοί** ἐστε ὅταν μισήσωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ὅταν ἀφορίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ **ὀνειδίσωσιν** καὶ ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου·

**Blessed are you** when people hate you, and when they exclude you, **revile** you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

**Matthew 5:11**, **μακάριοί** ἐστε ὅταν **ὀνειδίσωσιν**

ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ’ ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.

**Blessed** are you when people **revile** you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Peter’s expression in 4:14 actually is structured somewhat along the lines of the ‘third-person’ wisdom be-

Literary Structures of Ancient Beatitudes	
<b>Third Person:</b>	
Blessed are _____	Subject Designation
 'Because' Clause	
<b>Second Person:</b>	
Blessed are _____	(You)
 'Whenever' Clause	
<b>Jewish Literary Types</b>	
<b>Wisdom Beatitude:</b>	Focus on present world realization of blessing.
<b>Eschatological Beatitude:</b>	Focus on eschatological realization of blessing.

attitude found in Matthew 5:3-10, and is especially close to 5:10.<sup>22</sup> In the two admonitions, Peter projected eschatological joy based on divine vindication of suffering unjustly. But in the beatitude the divine blessing is realized in the present and is defined by the ὅτι-clause as the presence of God's Spirit upon us, which is the eternal divine Presence residing in our lives now.<sup>23</sup>

Thus he has reassured his readers that rejoicing in suffering is the best response to persecution. Not only will such be vindicated in the eschatological return of Christ, but also this response opens up the Presence of God through the Holy Spirit to assist and sustain the believer through his suffering.

Wow!

### b. Two sets of reasons for this exist, vv. 15-19

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. 16 Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?" 19 Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

15 μὴ γάρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος· 16 εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτου. 17 ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ' ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ; 18 καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβὴς καὶ ἀμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται; 19 ὥστε καὶ οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῶ κτίστη παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ.

#### Notes:

In this second segment of the passage Peter offers amplification of the situation of suffering persecution. The thought flow moves from primary reasons (γάρ in vv. 15-16) to secondary reasons (ὅτι in vv. 17-18) to reaching a conclusion (ὥστε in v. 19). The amplification continues to make extensive use of admonitions (μὴ...πασχέτω, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, παρατιθέσθωσαν) along with declarations (v. 17a) and rhetorical questions (vv. 17b-18) in order to communicate Peter's thoughts. But these function together as expressed reasons for the encouragements given first in verses 12-14.

**The Primary Reasons, vv. 15-16:** 15 μὴ γάρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος· 16 εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτου. Peter begins with a caution that none of the believers should allow themselves to get into situations where their suffering is due to having broken the law. Then he focuses on genuine Christian suffering with a couple

<sup>22</sup>Matthew 5:3 Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

<sup>23</sup>“Peter’s interest in the sayings of Jesus clustered at Matt 5:11–12 continues, although in this instance his language is as close to Luke 6:22 as to Matt 5:11. The parallel consists of a beatitude combined with the verb ὀνειδίζειν, ‘ridicule,’ plus some expression linking the ridicule specifically to a person’s commitment to Jesus: ‘for my sake’ (Matt); ‘for the sake of the Son of Man’ (Luke); ‘for the name of Christ’ (1 Peter). In adapting the beatitude form to his own argument, Peter follows the precedent already set in 3:14 (see Form/Structure/Setting) except that the introductory conditional clause (εἰ with the indicative) is a condition presuming reality rather than a remote contingency (i.e., εἰ with the optative in 3:14, 17). It is unlikely that the difference reflects any heightened urgency or intensity in our passage in comparison with 3:13–17 (as I once thought: Michaels, 399–400; cf. Beare, 165). Nor is the indicative chosen because Peter is speaking only of verbal abuse as distinguished from physical suffering or death (the ‘if’-clause of v 16 refers at least by implication to the latter). Rather, the indicative is the construction he normally uses in reference to persecution: cf. εἰ δέον (with ἐστὶν implied) in 1:6 (‘must’ or ‘by necessity’; lit. ‘as it must be’); also the ‘if’-clauses with the indicative, present in 2:19 and future in 2:20. It is the optative in 3:14, 17 that requires explanation in its own rhetorical context (see Comment on 3:14). At several points in his letter, Peter examines different possible cases or scenarios, some more remote and more drastic than others. Knowing that none of these will apply to all his readers and that some may not apply to any of them, he makes no attempt to distinguish levels of probability with the use of different types of conditional clauses.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 263.]

of admonitions.

**First, don't break the law and then have to suffer.** Suffering for the wrong reason doesn't bring God's help as described in vv. 12-14. Peter lists four categories of wrong suffering: ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος, "as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker." The first three of the categories are relatively self-explanatory.<sup>24</sup> The fourth category, ἢ ὡς ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος, catches attention because of the way it is attached to the list. It is not just a fourth item; it is an additional item attached to a list of three items, as ἢ ὡς signals. This word ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος<sup>25</sup> did not exist in ancient Greek prior to the writing of First Peter; perhaps Silas coined the word, which would not have been unusual in that world.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the precise meaning of the word is not certain, although "busybody" is the more commonly adopted understanding.<sup>27</sup> How such actions could lead to the individual suffering are not difficult to imagine, given developing tensions between Christians and their pagan neighbors with growing suspicion of them.

24 "On the other hand, no Christian should even consider risking suffering as a common criminal (unless, of course, the charge is a cover-up for the real charge of being a Christian, as often happens under some regimes). To underline his point Peter mentions two specific categories of criminals, murderer and thief, which would receive a knowing 'of course not' nod from his readers, and then adds the summary term 'criminal' to cover other types of evil activity condemned by law." [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 168-69.]

<sup>25</sup> ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος (v.l. ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος, s. Mlt-H. 272; B-D-F §124), ου, ὁ (elsewh. only Dionys. Areop., Ep. 8: MPG III 1089c ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος; cp. Epiphanius of Constantia [Salamis], Ancoratus 12; s. Lampe s.v.) a word whose meaning has not yet been determined w. certainty; w. φονεὺς, κλέπτης, κακοποιός **1 Pt 4:15**. EZeller, SBBerLAK 1893, 129ff, referring to the claim by Cynic preachers to be overseers (ἐπίσκοποι) of all men (Epict. 3, 22, 97 οὐ τὰ ἄλλότρια πολυπραγμονεῖ ὅταν τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἐπίσκοπῇ ἀλλὰ τὰ ἴδια), interprets the word as mng. **one who meddles in things that do not concern the pers., a busybody** (sim. REB. NRSV: *mischief maker*; s. PWendland, Kultur2 1912, 82, 1; Zahn, Einl. II 39f; ESelwyn, Comm. '46 ad loc. Cp. ἄλλοτρίους ἐπίσκοπος **1 Pt 4:15** P72, 'meddling in other people's affairs'=Lat. 'alienis custos'). But it is questionable whether such behavior would merit the kind of reprisal suggested by the context. Therefore a more serious type of crime has been suggested, and the proximity of κλέπτης has led to the conjecture **concealer of stolen goods**. For **spy, informer** (Lat. delator) s. AHilgenfeld, Einl. 1875, 630. Dssm., NB 51, 5=BS 224, 4 (BGU 531 II, 22 [II A.D.] οὔτε εἰμὶ ἄδικος οὔτε ἄλλοτρίων ἐπιθυμητής) suggests **revolutionist** (s. A Bischoff, ZNW 7, 1906, 271-74; 9, 1908, 171; PSchmidt, ZWT 50, 1908, 26ff). KERbes, ZNW 19, 1920, 39-44; 20, 1921, 249 considers it a Christian coinage, aimed at neglectful bishops. Tertullian, Scorpi. 12 'alieni speculator'. Cyprian, Test. 3, 37 'curas alienas agens'. Vulg. 'alienorum adpetitor'.—JBauer, BZ n.s. 22, '78, 109-15.—DELG. M-M. TW." [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 47.]

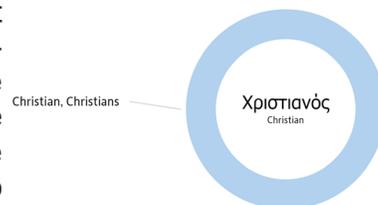
<sup>26</sup> "But then our author tacks on a fourth term, 'meddler,' repeating the 'as' to underline it as an addition. This may be his real concern in the list. It is an unusual term, appearing here for the first time in Greek, perhaps a coinage of Peter. The word *allotriepiskopos* comes from two root words, *allos*, 'belonging to another,' and *episkopos*, 'overseer.' The meanings suggested include 'one who has an eye on others' possessions,' 'the unfaithful guardian of goods committed to him,' 'one who meddles in things that do not concern him,' and an 'informer.'<sup>13</sup> The Christian writers who later use this term (probably picking it up from 1 Peter) appear to prefer the third of these meanings, 'one who interferes in someone else's business.'<sup>14</sup> That also seems the most likely meaning considering the roots from which the word is formed. Thus it is probable that our author is concerned that Christians in their rejection of idolatry and pagan morality or their zeal for the gospel not put their noses (or worse) into situations in which they ought not to be involved and thus justly earn the censure of pagan culture for transgressing culturally approved limits. Gentle persuasion is one thing; denouncing idolatry in a temple courtyard is another, as might also be interfering in the affairs of another family, however well meaning it might be. No Christian should disgrace Christ by being guilty of such things." [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 169.]

<sup>27</sup>The attempt to define its meaning based on three much later church father uses in two separate sources lacks credibility:

"Peter's concern in the passage centers on the much-discussed ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος, 'busybody' (cf. KJV/AV), set off from the epithets that precede it by the repetition of ὡς 'as.' This word, found only here in the NT and unattested in earlier Greek literature, occurs three more times in later Christian texts (cf. Lampe, 77): twice in Epiphanius in the fourth century (Ancoratus 12, PG 43.37C; Panarion, 66.85, PG 42.165B), and once in Dionysius the Areopagite in the fifth (Epistle, 8.1, PG 3.1089C; BGD, 40, lists only this one). Since none of these is directly dependent on 1 Peter, it is unlikely that the word is Peter's coinage. The reference in Dionysius is to bishops who encroach on another's diocese. The first text in Epiphanius is part of an exposition of 1 Cor 2:10, to the effect that the Holy Spirit is not probing into alien matters in searching out the 'deep things of God,' but into that which is his proper concern; the second makes the point that Jesus, when he broke the Sabbath, was not abrogating the work of another, but was, as God, doing his own proper work." [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 267.]

Peter cautions believers, don't engage in foolish actions that lead to suffering, and then expect God to bail you out of their consequences.

**Second, with authentic suffering take heart.** Verse 16 introduces a first class conditional sentence in the Greek that assumes believers are suffering. The experience of suffering is described as centering around the name Χριστιανός, "Christian."<sup>28</sup> The label was not commonly used to designate Christians in the first century, and thus is used only three times in the entire New Testament.<sup>29</sup> The name, evidently coined by non-Christians, seems to have been used on rare occasions as a label that could quickly bring down governmental persecution on individuals since Christianity was not yet a legalized legitimate religion.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the name at this period of time would not have been popular among Christians, and one can easily see how believers could have been ashamed to be so labeled. By the beginning of the second century, Christians had



<sup>28</sup>“Χριστιανός, οὗ, ὅ (formed like Ἡρωδιανοί [q.v.] or Καισαριανοί Epict. 1, 19, 19; s. TMommsen, Her 34, 1899, 151f; Dssm., LO 323 [LAE 377]; Hahn 263, 9; B-D-F §5, 2. On the Pompeian ins CIL IV 679, the reading of which is quite uncertain, s. VSchultze, ZKG 5, 1881, 125ff. On the spelling Χρηστιανός **Ac 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pt 4:16** [all v.l.]; AcPl Ha 9, 19 [cp. Just., A I, 4, 5]; s. FBlass, Her 30, 1895, 465ff; Harnack, SBBerlAk 1915, 762; B-D-F §24; Mlt-H. 72) **one who is associated w. Christ, Christ-partisan, Christian** (so also Lucian, Alex. 25; 38, M. Peregr. 11; 12; 13; 16; Tacitus, Ann. 15, 44; Suetonius, Nero 16; Pliny the Younger, Ep. 10, 96, 1; 2; 3 al., also in Trajan’s reply; ApcSed prol.; Ar., Just., Ath.; s. Hemer, Acts 177) **Ac 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pt 4:16** (JKnox, JBL 72, ’53, 187–89); IEph 11:2; IMg 4; IRo 3:2; IPol 7:3; MPol 3; 10:1; 12:1, 2; D 12:4; PtK 2 p. 15, 8; τῶν Χρ. Dg 1:1. Without the art. 2:6, 10; 4:6; 5:1; 6:1–9. πολλοὺς Χρ. ActPl Ha 9, 19.—As an adj. χριστιανός, ἡ, ὄν: ἡ χριστιανὴ τροφή ITr 6:1.—For inscriptions s. esp. EGibson, The ‘Christians for Christians’ Inscriptions from Phrygia ’78; New Docs 128–39.—RLipsius, Über den Ursprung u. ältesten Gebr. des Christennamens, Prog. Jena 1873; Zahn, Einl. II3 41ff; FKattenbusch, Das apostol. Symbol II 1900, 557ff; JDaniels, De Naam ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΙ: De Studiën 76, 1907, 568–80; JLeCoultré, De l’étymologie du mot ‘Chrétien’: RTP 40, 1907, 188–96; AGercke, Der Christenname ein Scheltnamen: Festschr. z. Jahrhundertfeier d. Univers. Breslau 1911, 360ff; Harnack, Mission I4 1923, 424ff; EPeterson, Christianus: Miscellanea Giov. Mercati I ’46, 355–72; EBickerman, HTR 42, ’49, 109–24; JMoreau, La Nouvelle Cléo 4, ’50, 190–92; HMattingly, JTS 9, ’58, 26–37 (cp. the term Augustiani); CSPicq, StTh 15, ’61, 68–78 (cp. the adj. Ciceronianus=of or belonging to Cicero: Sen., Con. 7, 2, 12).—DELG s.v. χριῶ. M-M. EDNT. TW. Sv.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1090.]

<sup>29</sup>Acts 11:26, καὶ εὗρων ἤγαγεν εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν. ἐγένετο δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐνιαυτὸν ὅλον συναχθῆναι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ διδάξαι ὄχλον ἱκανόν, χρηματίζουσα τε πρώτως ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητὰς **Χριστιανούς**.

and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”

Acts 26:28, ὁ δὲ Ἀγρίππας πρὸς τὸν Παῦλον· ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις **Χριστιανὸν** ποιῆσαι.

Agrippa said to Paul, “Are you so quickly persuading me to become a **Christian**?”

<sup>30</sup>“The identification of the reader as ‘Christian’ (Χριστιανός), following a common practice of forming a description of followers that included the name of the leader,<sup>112</sup> employs a word rare in the NT<sup>113</sup> and apparently coined by outsiders.<sup>114</sup> Followers of Christ used other names for themselves in the NT, for example, ‘disciple’ (μαθηταί, Acts 6:1; 9:19), ‘saints’ (ἅγιοι, Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2), ‘brothers’ (ἀδελφοί, Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 1:26).<sup>115</sup> Yet while the word ‘Christian’ continued to be the way outsiders characterized the followers of Christ,<sup>116</sup> it was soon adopted by the church as its own self-designation as well.<sup>117</sup> The association of this title with such sobriquets as ‘murderer’ and ‘thief’ can be construed to mean our author here refers to penalties imposed on Christians by courts of law simply because they were Christians.<sup>118</sup> It is surely true that there were occasions when Roman officials did impose the death penalty on Christians simply for being Christians, most notably under Nero and Pliny. Yet both of those instances were limited in scope and time, Nero’s to Rome following the fire,<sup>119</sup> and Pliny’s to Pontus upon his discovery of their beliefs.<sup>120</sup> Those two instances do indicate that the threat of confrontation with governmental authorities constantly hung over the Christian communities,<sup>121</sup> not only as followers of one executed as a criminal<sup>122</sup> but as members of what in Roman eyes appeared to be a collegium characterized by superstition<sup>123</sup> in a time when all collegia were subject to investigation.<sup>124</sup> Yet Christianity was not declared formally illegal until 249 CE under the emperor Decius,<sup>125</sup> and Pliny’s description of the extent of inroads made by the Christians in Pontus<sup>126</sup> as well as his need to consult the emperor on the correct course to be followed indicate that Christianity had not been generally considered illegal, at least in that part of Asia Minor. Such an indication is confirmed by Trajan’s unwillingness to make any general rule about the punishment of Christians, and his prohibition of seeking them out.<sup>127</sup> Nor is there any indication in our letter that Christians faced a possible death penalty or that our author was preparing them for martyrdom.<sup>128</sup> What they must endure is reproach and obloquy (v. 14) for their ‘hostility to human society’ demonstrated by their unwillingness to take part in normal social events (4:4). Such verbal abuse and social ostracism, as our letter indicates, came more from their neighbors than as the result of any legal action taken by the authorities.<sup>129</sup>” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter; Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 313-14.]

adopted the name Χριστιανός and turned it into a positive label.<sup>31</sup>

The two admonitions serving as the core expression move in a negative / positive sequence: **don't be ashamed, rather praise God**: μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν. The present tense imperative verbs used here emphasize these as continuing responsibilities, not as a momentary action. The sense is “**stop being ashamed, and constantly be praising God.**” When opposition was expressed against the believers because they were followers of Christ (= the meaning of Χριστιανός), some believers (τις ὑμῶν) evidently tended to pull away from public identification with this new religion. Peter could well have remembered his own experience years before of denying Christ in the courtyard of the high priest (cf. Mt. 26:69-75 // Mk. 14:66-72 // Lk. 22:54-62 // Jhn. 18:15-18, 25-27). Peter has already affirmed that believers will never experience shame because of Christ (2:6, οὐ μὴ καταισχυνοθῆ), but that their pagan neighbors who have slandered them will be put to shame on the day of judgment (3:16).<sup>32</sup> Now he urges his readers to not yield to the human instinct of pulling back in the face of hostility. Rather, they should be praising God because of this name Christian.<sup>33</sup>

**The Secondary Reasons, vv. 17-18:** 17 ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ' ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθοῦντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ; 18 καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβῆς καὶ ἁμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται; The causal conjunction ὅτι here used instead of γάρ in verse 14 introduces a second reason but at a secondary level of importance rather than at a primarily level as signaled by γάρ.<sup>34</sup>

Thus the incentives for enduring unjust suffering put on the table in vv. 12-14 have an additional basis that in part is motivated by the first reason mentioned in vv. 15-16. There should be no shock that the testing of the ‘fiery ordeal’ causing suffering is happening (v. 12). The test, a πειρασμὸν, is intended to disclose authentic commitment, and thus is a judgment, τὸ κρίμα. Therefore if the suffering comes ὡς Χριστιανός, as a Christian, our reaction will reflect how well we stand up under the test. Praising God reflects successful examination; feeling shame raises serious questions.

The thought flow in these two verses is ‘stair-casing’ in the sense that the next idea builds on the previous one in order to reach the climatic point in the final idea. Peter begins with ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ, “**the time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God.**” The moment of suffering begins (τοῦ ἄρξασθαι) the divine examination of God’s people in anticipation of final judgment still ahead. Whereas the outside world labeled believers as Χριστιανούς, Peter labels them as τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ, the house of God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15<sup>35</sup>).



<sup>31</sup>“By the second century, Χριστιανός had been adopted by ‘Christians’ themselves as a self-designation (Ign. Eph. 11.2; Magn. 4; Rom. 3.2; Pol. 7.3; Mart. Pol. 3, 10.1, 12.1–2; Did. 12.4).” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 268.]

<sup>32</sup>“μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, ‘don’t be ashamed’ (lit., ‘let him not be ashamed,’ with the τις ὑμῶν, ‘any of you,’ v 15a, still presupposed as the subject). Peter’s conviction is that believers in Christ ‘will never be put to shame’ (οὐ μὴ καταισχυνοθῆ, 2:6, citing Isa 28:16), while those who slander them will (cf. 3:16). Yet he writes here in the imperative, not the indicative mood. His emphasis is not on what will objectively be the case (i.e., that Christians will be vindicated) but on what his readers’ attitude should be subjectively when faced with verbal abuse and physical danger. Peter’s aspiration for them corresponds to Paul’s aspiration for himself in the wake of imprisonment and the possibility of death (Phil 1:20; cf. 2 Tim 1:12; cf. also the warnings of Jesus in Mark 8:38//Luke 9:26).” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 269.]

<sup>33</sup>A few manuscripts (P<sup>049</sup> M) read ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ (“**in this matter**”) instead of ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ (“**because of this name**”), in an effort to clarify the reference. But the overwhelming manuscript evidence favors ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ. Michaels’ arguments (WBC) for the originality of ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ are unconvincing.

<sup>34</sup>It is interesting to observe how many commentators miss this simple point of ancient Greek grammar. As a subordinate causal conjunction ὅτι sometimes introduces sentences rather than dependent clauses inside sentences. A simple switch γάρ from to ὅτι would clearly signal that the second reason introduced by ὅτι is not on the same level of importance as those introduced by γάρ. “There is no doubt about the consecutive use of ὅτι in the later Greek.” [A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Logos, 1919; 2006), 1001.] It seems to me that many commentators cannot think outside the categories of English grammar, and thus have difficulty grasping grammar concepts that cannot be exactly reproduced in English.

<sup>35</sup>NRSV: **if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.**

ἐὰν δὲ βραδύνω, ἵνα εἰδῆς πῶς δεῖ ἐν οἴκῳ θεοῦ ἀναστρέφεσθαι, ἣτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζώντος, στῦλος καὶ ἐδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας·

Some debate exists over the background of this image.<sup>36</sup> Is τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ but another way of saying God's family? Some contend so, and the translation "household of God" reflects this. The other possible background meaning is that this phrase assumes the temple in Jerusalem. Peter plays off the judgment of God on the temple as set forth in Ezek. 9:6-7<sup>37</sup> and Mal. 3:1, as well as the gospel accounts of Jesus' cleansing of the temple in His earthly ministry. This latter understanding is consistent with Peter's designation of the community of faith as a spiritual house in 2:5.

*The next step* in his thought is εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ' ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ; ("and since it begins first with us, what will be the outcome for those disobeying the Gospel of God?"). Peter assumes that we believers face divine examination first. Given the thoroughness of this process for believers, what would be the expected outcome of the divine exam of those having rejected the Gospel that God has provided? Not a pretty picture, to be sure!

*The third step* is καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβῆς καὶ ἁμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται; ("And 'if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?") Here Peter appeals to Proverbs 11:31 (LXX) almost word for word in the Septuagint text.<sup>38</sup> This builds on the first two expressions in verse 17 in order to make even clearer that the outcome of the ungodly will be spiritual disaster.<sup>39</sup> Thus, facing unjust suffering signals the beginning of a divine judgment with believers that will ultimately extend to unbelievers in final judgment. And this judgment on unbelievers will be the vindication that believers have made the correct choice in following Jesus.

**The Conclusion, v. 19:** ὥστε καὶ οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῷ κτίστῃ παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀγαθοποιῶν, "Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good." The conjunction ὥστε signals a conclusion to be drawn from the preceding discussion. Peter then sums up with an admonition to believers in light of everything that he has described in vv. 12-18. The heart of the admonition is πιστῷ κτίστῃ παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν (to the faithful Creator let them turn their lives over).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup>1) "the household of God" - RSV, NRSV, NASB, ESV, HCSB, LEB, ; "God's household" - TNIV; "God's family" - NCV; "the family of God" - NIV, NIrV, NIV (1984); "God's own children" - NLT; "la propia familia de Dios" - Dios Habla Hoy; "la familia de Dios" - Nueva Versión Internacional; "den Kindern Gottes" - Neues Leben Bibel.

2) "the house of God" - KJV, ASV, Douay-Rheims, NKJV, Wey; "God's house" - Wycliffe; "His own house" - Phillips; "de domo Dei" - Vulgate; "la casa de Dios" BdA, BR-V, Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana de Hoy, Nueva Traducción Viviente, Reina Valera Contemporánea, Reina-Valera (1960, 1995); "su propio pueblo" - Traducción en lenguaje actual; "dem Hause Gottes" Luther (1912, 1984), Elberfelder (1905), Menge-Bibel; "Haus Gottes" - Einheitsübersetzung, Zürcher Bibel, Elberfelder (2006), Schlachter Bibel; "seinem eigenen Haus" - Neue Genfer Übersetzung; "la maison de Dieu" - Segond (1910), Ostervald.

<sup>37</sup>NRSV: 6 Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, but touch no one who has the mark. And begin at my sanctuary (ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγίων μου ἄρξασθε). So they began with the elders who were in front of the house. 7 Then he said to them, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go!" So they went out and killed in the city.

<sup>38</sup>NRSV: If the righteous are repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!

Prov. 11:31, εἰ ὁ μὲν δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβῆς καὶ ἁμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται;

1 Pet. 4:18, καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβῆς καὶ ἁμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται;

[Septuaginta: SESB Edition, ed. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), Pr 11:31.]

<sup>39</sup>Peter reinforces the rhetorical question of v 17b with another, formulated similarly and taken verbatim (except for the omission of the particle μέν) from Prov 11:31 LXX. It is more likely that the text from Proverbs helped to shape Peter's rhetoric already in v 17b than that he added it as an afterthought, ὁ δίκαιος, 'the just person' (corresponding both to 'us' in v 17b, and to 'those who suffer when God requires it' in v 19), is the Christian believer (cf. ἐπὶ δικαίους in 3:12). μόλις here means 'barely' or 'with difficulty' (BGD, 526.1;) rather than 'scarcely' (526.3). In the context of 1 Peter, the emphasis of the words μόλις σώζεται ('is barely saved') is on σώζεται: whatever the difficulty, and whether or not they suffer physical death, the 'just' will be saved (cf. 1:5, 9-10; 2:2; 3:21). The sure hope of final vindication dominates the entire epistle. Yet this salvation is not necessarily an easy thing or without cost (cf. the Gospel tradition: e.g., Mark 8:35; 13:13, 1920, 22). The terms, 'godless' and 'sinner,' although not used elsewhere in 1 Peter, refer clearly enough to the 'disobedient' of the preceding verse, the enemies of the Christian movement. Their fate Peter leaves grimly in question (cf. his vague but ominous language in 2:8, 3:16b-17, and at the end of his psalm quotation in 3:12b). [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 272.]

<sup>40</sup>The inner attitude in doing this, then, is one of trust. The image of entrusting appears frequently in the NT (e.g., Luke 12:48; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:2), including that of entrusting people to God (Acts 14:23; 20:32). It means 'to hand over something of value to the care of another.'<sup>23</sup> In our context one is handing over one's most valuable possession, one's very self, to God. The image is likely drawn from Ps. 31:5 (30:5 in Greek), 'Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.' Following Christ (who quoted this psalm during his persecution in Luke 23:46), they are to commit themselves to God, for he is 'a

The qualification of proper suffering continues here with οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, those suffering according to the will of God. This captures the essence of the previous qualifications: v. 13, κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν, sharing Christ's sufferings; v. 14, ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, for the name of Christ; v. 16, ὡς Χριστιανός, suffers as a Christian. The inward action is a deliberate decision to entrust one's very life to God: πιστῶ κτίστη παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν. The outward expression of having done that is ἐν ἀγαθοποιῶν, while doing good.<sup>41</sup>

This is what we believers need to understand about unjust suffering. When a pagan world inflicts harm on us simply for being a committed Christian, shock and resentment have no place in our reaction. Rather rejoicing and praising God are our responses. We have entrusted ourselves to a faithful God!

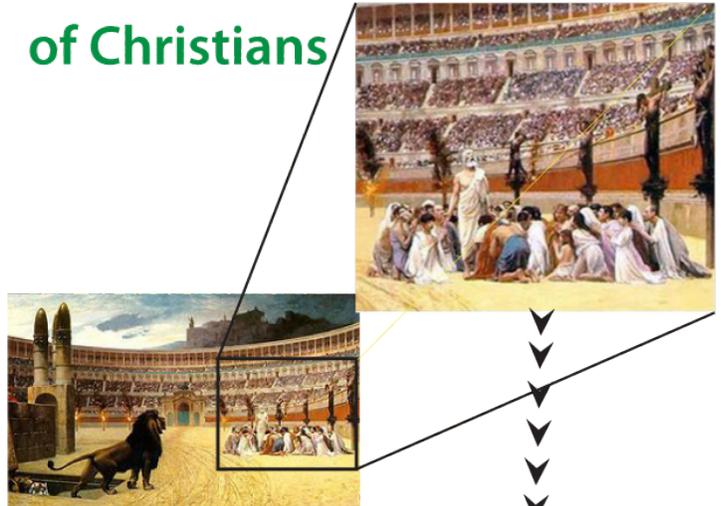
Our prayer and hope is that we will be spared such harmful treatment. But such is not certain even in our world. Countless numbers of believers in many countries are experiencing exactly what Peter talked about to his initial readers. Persecution of Christians is not just a subject of history!

In the 20th century, Christians have been persecuted by Muslim and Hindu groups inter alia, and by atheistic states such as the USSR and North Korea.

Currently (as of 2010), as estimated by the Christian missionary organisation Open Doors UK, an estimated 100 million Christians face persecution, particularly in North Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>2</sup> A recent study, cited by the Vatican, reported that 75 out of every 100 people killed due to religious hatred are Christian.<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately, such continues to take place. The human rights organization, *Persecution.org: International Christian Concern*, tracks this activity and posts updated figures etc. at their web site <http://www.persecution.org/> regularly. We must pray for fellow Christians going through such trials and difficulties.

## Persecution of Christians



faithful Creator.” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 173.]

<sup>41</sup>“This noun occurs four times in 1 Clem (2.2.7; 33.1; 34.2), but only here in the NT. It is difficult to decide whether the preposition ἐν is to be taken instrumentally as ‘by’ (BGD, 260.3.1a) or temporally as ‘while’ (BGD, 260.2.3]). Is it the author’s point that believers ‘entrust their lives’ to God precisely by doing good, or that when they do good they should trust God to protect their lives from danger? The logic of the sentence favors the latter, with ‘while doing good’ as the better translation.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 274.]

<sup>42</sup>“Persecution of Christians,” Wikipedia.org.