

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1 Peter 4:12-19

Don't Let Suffering Stop You from Living Out the Gospel

Digging In

1. Read 1 Peter 4:12-13

- a. V.12
 - i. Why would the apostle Peter give an imperative to not be astonished over trials happening to them? Why would anyone consider trials strange?
- b. V.13
 - i. Why is the apostle Peter telling Christians to rejoice when they suffer?
 - ii. What does the apostle Peter mean when he says, "...But to the **degree** that you **share** in the sufferings of Christ, **rejoice**..."? ¹
- c. Summarize vv.12-13 in your own words.

2. Read 1 Peter 4:14-16

- a. V.14
 - i. Based on the evidence in v.14, are the churches the apostle Peter is writing to dying for their faith in Jesus?
 - ii. What does the apostle Peter mean when he says, "the Spirit of glory,³⁵ who is *the Spirit of God*,³⁶ rests³⁷ on you"? ²
 1. Here is some assistance:
 - a. "The wording of the verse hearkens back to Isa 11:1–3, where the branch of Jesse, obviously Jesus himself for Peter, will be endowed with the Holy Spirit.²³ The wording of v. 2 in the Septuagint is especially important. Isaiah said about Jesse's branch that "the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him" (*anapausetai ep auton pneuma tou theou*).²⁴ The main difference is that Isaiah used a future tense verb, while in Peter we have a present tense, probably to emphasize that the prophecy uttered in Isaiah has now been fulfilled and that the Spirit that was upon Jesus now also rests on Christians. Believers who suffer are blessed because they are now enjoying God's favor, tasting even now the wonder of the glory to come and experiencing the promised Holy Spirit."²⁵ ⁵³
- b. V.15
 - i. Why was the apostle Peter giving the worst examples for how a Christian should not suffer?
 1. Can a Christian be a murderer or thief or criminal or a troublemaker?⁴ Why or why not?

¹ W. Hall Harris III et al., eds., *The Lexham English Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 1 Pe 4:13.

³⁵ **tc** Many MSS, some of them important and early ([ξ] A P 33 81 323 945 1241 1739 *pm* bo), add καὶ δυνάμεως (*kai dunameōs*; "and of power") here. The shorter reading is supported by \mathfrak{P}^{72} B K L Ψ 049 *pm*. Although the evidence is evenly divided, the longer reading looks to be an explanatory or liturgical expansion on the text and for this reason should be considered secondary.

³⁶ **tn** Grk "the Spirit of glory and of God."

³⁷ **sn** A quotation taken from Isa 11:2.

² Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 1 Pe 4:14.

²³ Johnson suggests that there is also an allusion to the temple as Yahweh's resting place, where God's glory and Spirit dwell ("Fire in God's House," 289–90).

²⁴ The LXX says "the Spirit of God" (emphasis mine). J. W. Pryor is quite unconvincing when he dismisses the clear allusion to Isaiah 11 and forges a link to the descent of God's glory upon Mount Sinai instead ("First Peter and the New Covenant [II]," *RTR* 45 [1986]: 49). At this point he forces the evidence in trying to sustain an exodus motif in 1 Peter.

²⁵ Some manuscripts have the intriguing addition κατὰ μὲν αὐτοὺς βλασφημεῖται, κατὰ δὲ ὑμᾶς δοξάζεται (in their eyes it is blasphemy, but in your eyes it is glory; Majority text, K, L, P, Ψ). Some scholars defend their authenticity, arguing that (1) the words were accidentally deleted because of the—ται ending, (2) that the μὲν-δέ construction fits Petrine style, (3) that the addition does not contribute much to the passage, and (4) that abrupt use of αὐτοὺς parallels αὐτῶν in 3:14 (cf. P. R. Rodgers, "The Longer Reading of 1 Peter 4:14," *CBQ* 43 [1981]: 94; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 265). But external evidence favors its omission, and we probably have a gloss by an early scribe (see *TCGNT*, 625; Davids, *First Peter*, 168, n. 11).

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 222.

⁴ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 1 Pe 4:15.

- c. V.16
 - i. What is the motivation for Christians to not be ashamed when they suffer?
 - ii. How does God get the glory for Christians suffering for their faith?
- d. Summarize vv.14-16 in your own words.

3. Read 1 Peter 4:17-19

- a. V.17
 - i. What does it mean “**For** it is time for judgment to **begin**, starting with the house⁴² of God”⁵? Read: 1 Peter 1:6-7 and Malachi 3.
 - 1. What is the “house of God” or “household of God”? Read: 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 3:6.
 - 2. Who are the “**disobedient** to the gospel of God”? ⁶
- b. V.18
 - i. What does it mean that “the righteous are saved with difficulty”? Read: Proverbs 11:31.
 - 1. Here is some additional help:
 - a. “The difficulty envisioned is the suffering believers must endure in order to be saved. God saves his people by refining and purifying them through suffering. It is implied here that salvation is eschatological, a gift that believers will receive after enduring suffering (cf. 1:5, 9). If the godly are saved through the purification of suffering, then the judgment of the “ungodly and sinner” must be horrific indeed.⁴⁶ The verb “will become” (*phaneitai*) refers to the eschatological judgment of unbelievers.⁴⁷ Peter wrote this to motivate believers to endure in suffering, and we have seen a similar argument in 4:3–6. Suffering may be difficult now, but by participating in the pain of following Christ believers escape the condemnation coming upon the wicked.”^{48,7}
- c. V.19
 - i. What is “God’s will” according to the apostle Peter? Read: 3:17.
 - ii. Why does Peter give the imperative to “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator”? Read 1 Peter 2:23; Luke 23:46; Acts 14:23, 20:32.
- d. Summarize vv. 17-19 in your own words.

4. Getting Personal

- a. *How should Christians live their lives in the midst of suffering?*
- b. *What stands out to you about the apostle Peter’s message to these churches?*
- c. *How can we apply what the apostle Peter is talking about to what is going on in the world today?*
- d. *Do people know you are a Christian? How?*
- e. *According to what we just studied, what is God’s will for a Christian?*
- f. *How has this study convicted you? What are you going to do about that conviction?*

⁴² **tn** Grk “to begin from the house.”

⁵ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 1 Pe 4:17.

⁶ W. Hall Harris III et al., eds., *The Lexham English Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 1 Pe 4:17.

⁴⁶ Contra Elliott, Peter was not leaving open in this context the prospect that the wicked may repent in the future (1 Peter, 804).

⁴⁷ Dubis, 1 Peter 4:12–19, 167.

⁴⁸ So C. E. B. Cranfield, *I & II Peter and Jude: Introduction and Commentary*, TBC (London: SCM, 1960), 122; Goppelt, *I Peter*, 333; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 316.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 228–229.