

“Strangely Standing in Suffering” I Peter 4:12-19

Context: Peter’s encyclical was written to a small population of Christians in ancient Asia Minor who were seen as suspect by the Romans. Suspicion arose because rebirth from the life-changing Word of the Lord resulted in putting on lifestyles that reflect Christ’s nature. Chapter one describes the call to recipients of the letter to live as ‘side dwellers’ separated from the world’s perishing constructs. As God’s elect they were called to participate in a God-empowered transformation by willfully coming “under the hearing” as His chosen unto eternal salvation. In chapter two, Peter describes what God-empowered transformations looked like. Chapter three explains godly living in relation to family, fellow-believers, and within our unbelieving community.

Pivotal verse: Stand firm in the true grace of God (cf. I Peter 5:12).

1. Standing in joy – I Peter 4:12-13

Two responses to suffering under persecution are presented. First is a state of befuddlement along with the inner voice of “why me, am I not one of the beloved elect?” Peter’s response provides a contrast. It is a response of joy that sees suffering as affirming one’s fellowship with Jesus’ earthly suffering and joyful relief in fellowship with Jesus’ consummating glory.

2. Standing in hope – I Peter 4:14-18

Insult turns into a blessing because insult is a testimony of the Spirit’s dwelling in you and radiance of Christ’s character from you. Contrary to the world’s shaming, it is evidence of future happiness in Christ’s kingdom.

3. Standing in faith – I Peter 4:19

Placing one’s life in God’s hand by living a ‘holy’ life, even in the fires of suffering, is a testimony of faith that God is both trustworthy and sovereignly powerful enough to bring His own into eternal rest according to His will and good pleasure.

For Further Study:

- Look up either the word 'surprised' or 'strange' translated from the Greek term *xenos*. Have you ever been "[surprised by suffering?](#)" Is or was your response "alien" to those around you?

- The use of an Old Testament passage in the New Testament begs the question "Why?" As a **Bible study method**, look up the Old Testament reference used in 1 Peter 5:18. What earthly rewards is Solomon speaking about in the Proverbs 11:18-21 citation? Have you seen it? Is Solomon's observation true?

- Peter uses "will of God" 5 times in this letter with 3 of those being in this chapter. Using your concordance, look up the context of his usage (i.e. 1 Peter 2:15; 5:2). As part of your morning prayer ask God to direct your attitude and behavior in one circumstance today.

Transformation exercise:

Each evening at dinner time, give thanks for one circumstance that affirms the Spirit of God resting upon you (cf. 1 Peter 4:14). Pray for someone who is suffering even though they are a Christ follower.