

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

My 3 girls have given me back 6 boys and finally one precious little girl. All of them are precious to us, but the girl seems to garner at least as much attention as the boys.

The boys all came in pairs. And whenever it's birthday time for the older brother, we are careful to wrap something up for the younger sibling so that it won't just be the big brother that gets everything.

Why do we do that. Because we understand that he doesn't understand why big brother got a pile of presents and he didn't get anything. We try to ease that pain a little bit.

When they grow bigger we don't have to do that any more. The younger brother learns that it isn't all about him. On his brother's birthday, it's all about big brother. And in fact those days pass by really fast.

We christians are like that little example. We're born into this world, broken. Sinful. And we never completely grow out of the idea that this life is all about me.

In fact our current generations x, y, z, whatever after that has carried this idea to it's logical or illogical extremes. It's all about me and I won't get married, or commit myself to someone else because that might interfere with me, me, me.

And I don't want to be bothered with children. I don't want any responsibility. In fact it's perfectly acceptable to never grow up at all. I don't want to be an adult and contribute anything to this community or this world. I live for what I can get from it. I don't give anything back.

That's extreme, but some of that carries over into the church. The

church is made up of broken sinners that are all somewhere on the path to unbrokenness, so we aren't surprised by this. That's the default position for sinners. That's where we begin on this adventure.

But hopefully, like the 2 brothers, we grow out of some of our selfishness. God has a way of graciously teaching us, it's not all about us after all. Sometimes that grace comes with pain. Sometimes it's extremely painful.

Whenever there's a disaster, a mass shooting, a fire that burns everything down, an earthquake that wipes out cities and people, a terrorist attack that leaves us stunned, you inevitably hear someone say; Where was God? Why did He allow that to happen? If He's a good God, why didn't He intervene?

Those are big questions. Really big questions. And right about now, you're saying to yourselves, way smarter men than Jim have struggled with those questions for centuries. What is this little man going to add?

We need a perspective shift that only a book of truth revealed by God Himself can give. Like the little brother at the birthday, we think this life is all there is, it's obviously all about us, and if God is real, and He can make things happen and not happen, why isn't He giving me my best life now?

Here's the reality check. God created us to worship, honor, and adore Him. He created us for worship. The party isn't for us. It's for Him. And the truth of the matter is, at the fall, when Adam chose to rebel against God's will, the rulership of this world defaulted from man, that it was created for, to Satan.

From that day forward we are all born broken. Born with us at the center of our universe instead of God who made us for Him. And this book we hold is the story of how God is restoring us back to our first estate. God is sovereign over this world. He's sending His Son, for the second time, to depose Satan and to crush evil and rule this world in righteousness.

God has every second of His timeline under His control. But for now, Satan has some latitude to create havoc in this world. For now, we have some promises. We look at all the evil happening all around us, and we fall back on the Sovereignty of God. He is in ultimate control. He won't allow a hair on your head to fall, unless it's in His ultimate plan.

But, we need to grow up and realize, it's not about here and now. We will live eternally with God. This isn't all we get. It very well may be in His bigger plan for us to suffer now and glorify Him in our suffering, so that He can shower us with glory alongside His Son on that day when we see Him. A short season of suffering. An eternal weight of glory. God in His grace allows that. In fact Paul and Peter call that a 'win'.

I hope that helps to set the stage for what Peter is going to tell us in these verses.

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

Within God's sovereign plan to restore you and to retake this earth for His glory, there is latitude for things to go in different directions than what we would have chosen.

We think God should just give us a nice easy life with everything we need, filled with love and good things and then one day we should just float up to heaven.

God loves us too much to let our version happen. He allows testing and trials in order to make us cling to Him in faith and ultimately to grow up into people who glorify Him through trials and testings.

These folks were being persecuted for the sake of holding Jesus name. They were losing their property. Losing their stuff. Some were going to prison, and some, including Peter himself, would die for their belief in Jesus.

When that tidal wave first rolls over you, your head pops up for oxygen

and you say, what is going on? Why is God allowing this awful thing to happen?

I love to listen to John Piper. He has an illustration that is really helpful for us. Sail boats. Sail boats are designed with a keel that hangs below the water line, unseen, and it has ballast weight built in.

So when a giant wind or wave side load hits those little boats you'll see them roll all the way over where it looks like the sail would almost touch the water, but that weight that hangs down, pulls them back upright.

Piper says we Christians are like those little boats. When we study God's word and our faith begins to grow, it's like it's adding more weight in our keel, and when the storms hit, we think we're done for, but God brings us back upright.

So Peter begins this section telling us, the fiery ordeal is nothing to be surprised at.

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

We're not underselling this. The fiery ordeals are very real. Christians go through the depths of despair. It is not abnormal. David's Psalm 42 comes to our minds;

*1 As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, O God.*

*2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?*

*3 My tears have been my food day and night,
While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"*

*4 These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in*

procession to the house of God,

With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And why have you become disturbed within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him

For the help of His presence.

6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me;

Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan

And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls;

All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.

8 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;

And His song will be with me in the night,

A prayer to the God of my life.

9 I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me?"

Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me,

While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

11 Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And why have you become disturbed within me?

Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,

The help of my countenance and my God.

It's almost as if David is standing outside of himself asking these very real questions, Why are you depressed. and then he admonishes himself. You, trust in God. You, soul, praise God.

Peter never says the fiery trial is over rated. He only says, don't be surprised when it comes.

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

I love that line in Fiddler on the Roof when Tevye says; *God, I know we are the chosen people, but once in a while, can't you choose someone else?*

And Tevye is right. We are chosen by God to belong to Him and to dwell in His righteousness with a perfect righteousness given to us in His Son. The trials, for the chosen ones, only purify us like gold that is smeltered.

But for the rest of the world, the trials of disasters and troubles are just a little taste of future things. They have only disaster and trouble to face, alone, apart from God, for eternity.

The fiery trials *come upon you for your testing*, Why? Why does God do that? Hebrews 12 is a good reminder for us.

5 And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, or lose heart when He rebukes you. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises everyone He receives as a son." 7 Endure suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

A good dad stretches his son's life experiences. Wisely. The bible says don't exasperate him. Stop short of overwhelming him. But increase the pressures of life's experiences little by little so that he becomes an adult. We have a dearth of adults these days.

God stretches us, just like dads and sons, mother's and daughters. No pain, no gain.

Jesus approaches this in the parable about the 4 soils. 3 of the soils failed, and the fruitfulness of being a real child of God never occurs. The sun spoils the plant with no real roots. The weeds choke out the

plant when left unweeded. The hardpan soil never germinates at all.

God tests our faith and some morning you wake up and you've been a christian 47 years. Good times and bad, you say with David, soul, what are you depressed about. You hope in God. We want to be that good soil after all the sun and wind and heat and cold. We want to be fruitful in our season. We want to finish this race. We want to endure every test and be found faithful at the last.

We've been in Tonopah a long time now. The church seems to be a revolving door. People come. Some little test comes, something they don't like, something offends them, the sun comes out and burns them, and then we don't see them anymore.

Enduring times of testing is what proves a real faith. It is normal as the day is long. And we've not endured very much, compared to other christians in other places at other times. My little tests seem pretty wimpy compared to what real christians are enduring in Moslem nations these days.

I mention the possibility of degrees of suffering, degrees of testing, because Peter alludes to that in the next verse.

13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

Our family suffered with a daughter that someone hurt. We thought we would die. It almost destroyed us. And yet, we haven't suffered like the christians in Syria that have had to leave everything behind and flee for their lives. Some are seperated from their families. Unbelievable suffering. And it's directly related to them holding on to the name of Christ.

And Peter alludes that those who endure more now, will rejoice more when they see Jesus.

Paul also alludes to this when he speaks of different degrees or depths of

knowing Christ to the Phillipians. He says; I have suffered the loss of all things, and consider them to be rubbish compared to knowing Him.

And he says it three ways, three degrees if you will. That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. In Phillipians 3:8 - 11.

I've thought much about that over the years. I know that I know Him. That was instantaneous when I asked Him to come into my heart and forgive my sins. And to some small degree, even in this little pulpit, we've experienced the power of His resurrection. We see Him at work in this place.

But I can't say like Paul that I've shared in the fellowship of His sufferings. Perhaps those days will come. We don't know, but I have not. Not really. Nobody's taking my stuff away or throwing me in prison. Nobody is hurling the hate and vitriol that Jesus endured, at me. Not yet anyways.

13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

The more we share in His sufferings, the more we will rejoice when He appears.

By the way, that is a distinctive reference to a certain time. The revelation of His Glory.

Peter was the disciple that would do crazy stuff to close the gap between him and Jesus. Walk on water. Strip off his outer garment and swim to shore. Whatever it took. He hated to be apart from Him. He just wanted to be in His presence.

All of them experienced that. Peter was just the most rambunctious of the group. He was passionate about being in Jesus company. Listen to the other disciples talk about this day. The day we are rejoined physically with Jesus. The day He appears in glory. The day the

separation is over. Forever.

Thomas was beside himself on the night of Jesus separation from them in Jerusalem. Before the arrest. In the upper room Jesus says;

John 14:4 You know the way to the place where I am going.” 5 “Lord, said Thomas, “we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me....

Thomas wanted to be crystal clear. Where are you going and how do we get there. Period.

John, the apostle reflects on that day when we will see Him.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Not only are we going to see Him with our eyes. Physically see Him and be with Him, John says; We're going to be like Him. He'll appear glorified, and in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, we are also going to be glorified.

Beloved, that is going to be a joyous occasion. This body of sin, left behind. With Jesus, in a glorified body, forever. Paul talks about that occasion as he's about to be crushed by this world. To Timothy he writes;

2Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who

have loved His appearing.

When the waves of this world roll over you and you think you're surely finished, the despair is drowning you, Peter says; Rejoice! *13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.*

We are the only people who, when we're bent over in an orange jumpsuit and a guy dressed in a black uniform with a machete is standing behind us, have reason to rejoice. That is and has always been unique to real believers. True christians. This world is 5 minutes long. Eternity with our Saviour; **is forever.**

All this world can do to me is take this present life away. We have Jesus waiting for us on the other side. Some of us hope to see Him in the air, soon, when He comes to call His church out of this world.

That is the hope that transcends any trouble this world can cast on us.

Finally, Peter says; *14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

In the nasty now and now, if this world does press in on you, like it did on these believers. You're public enemy number one. Some were losing their property. Some were going to prison. Some, like Peter, not so long after he wrote these things, would die horrific deaths.

Peter says, we look to the day when we'll see Him, physically with our eyes, that's the future, but in the terrible moment, we are not alone.

Jesus doesn't send us into the war zone to do His spiritual battle with Satan, alone. Those christians on the front line of spiritual battle in this world are the most blessed. Because the Holy Spirit of Christ will rest on you in that situation.

That's our promise. Fiery trial is normal for most believers in this world. Most of us are un-acquainted with what Peter is describing. We go through struggles and sorrows, and the Lord is gracious to us. He

comes along side and comforts and helps.

There is a real sense, even in our situation where we don't really endure much push back, that when we witnessing to our families and friends and neighbors, the folks we work with, in those moments, I always sense the Spirits presence with me.

How much more, when this world is allowed to surround me and desires to cast me out, and hates me because I belong to Jesus, because I'm a christian, will that Spirit of glory and grace rest upon me.

Trials are normal for this world. In the next world, no more tests, no more tears, no more trials, endless joy in His presence. But for now, if necessary, we endure the trials and look to Jesus. We long for His coming. We long to see Him and be with Him.