

^{4:12} Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be 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 sinner?"^a ¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Review the context.

- Peter is encouraging the Church through its various trials. Read 1 Peter 1:6-9 for the Apostle's message of *glorious joy*. Look for parallel words/phrases that are used in both passages and circle those words/themes above.

1 Peter 1:6-9

⁶In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Understand it.

- Why should Christians not be surprised by suffering? How did Jesus prepare his followers for this difficult road?
- What seems to be the purpose in suffering (for/with Christ)?
- How were Christians being "insulted" (or "reviled") in the ancient Church (v.14)?
- Why does Peter make a distinction between suffering justly (for doing wrong) and suffering unjustly (for doing good)? (v.15)
- How might someone who is called a "Christian" be ashamed to "bear that name" (v.16)? What is Peter's exhortation to those who might be hearing that name as an insult?
- What is the judgment that God's household must experience? What is the significance of the timeliness of this judgment?

Apply it.

- How does your life demonstrate trust in God when our non-believing world challenges and insults you?
- What does a life of "commitment to the Creator" and to "doing good" mean to you?
- How are you mindful of Christian persecution in other cultures and praying for their endurance?
- Are there ways your life seems to indicate that you are ashamed to bear the name of Christ? If so, spend time in prayer and repentance. Ask for the Spirit to fuel your joy in bearing that name.

^a 1 Peter 4:18 Prov. 11:31 (see Septuagint)