

# Faith that Endures, Teacher's Guide

## Lesson 5: Suffering Without Shame

### 1 Peter 4:12-19

#### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Set the scene before you touch a single verse, because the tone of this passage depends on it. Peter is writing to Christians scattered across Asia Minor who are being insulted, slandered, and squeezed out of ordinary life for one reason: they had obeyed the gospel. He has already told them they are “elect exiles” (1 Peter 1:1), and now he tells them the thing they least expected to hear. The fire is not a mistake. It is not evidence that God has looked away, and it is not proof that they took a wrong turn. Help your class feel how disorienting this was. These people had believed, repented, and been baptized into Christ, and their reward, so far, was that their neighbors despised them. Peter’s first word to them is not sympathy. It is “do not be surprised.” Start there, and the whole passage opens.

The hinge of the lesson is verses 15 and 16, and if you get that hinge right the class will leave with something they can use. Peter refuses to bless suffering in general. He draws a line straight down the middle of it. Suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler, and you have earned what you got, and there is no glory in it. Suffer as a Christian, and you must not be ashamed. Guard this carefully in both directions, because your class will lean one way or the other. Some Christians are genuinely persecuted and quietly ashamed of it. Others are simply difficult, and then read the resulting friction as a badge of faithfulness. Peter puts “meddler” in the same list as “thief,” which should sober all of us. Not every cost we pay is a cross. Help the class learn to tell the difference honestly.

Two boundaries need a steady hand, and both sit in the back half of the passage. First, verse 14 says “the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” Do not let this become a promise of a felt sensation, an inner voice, or a miraculous sign to be sought today. Those confirming gifts belonged to the apostolic age and have ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Hebrews 2:3-4), and Peter is stating a fact about who abides with a suffering Christian, not describing an experience to chase. Second, verse 18 says “if the righteous is scarcely saved.” Someone will hear Calvinist despair in it, and someone else will not hear it at all because they believe arrival is guaranteed. It is neither. Salvation is hard-won, sure in Christ, and genuinely ours to abandon. Aim the hour at a class that stops being embarrassed and starts entrusting.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*In verse 12, Peter tells believers not to be “surprised at the fiery trial.” Why do you think Christians are often surprised by suffering, and why does Peter call this reaction misguided?*

## **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Begin with the word Peter chose, because it is doing work. “Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” The word is the language of a stranger, something foreign, out of place, unaccounted for. Peter is not telling them to stop hurting. He is telling them to stop being astonished. Ask your class to hear the difference, because it matters pastorally. Pain is not the problem in verse 12. Bewilderment is. A Christian who expects the fire can walk into it. A Christian who thinks the fire means something has gone wrong will spend his strength trying to explain it.

Then draw out why the surprise happens, because your class will recognize themselves. Most of us absorb, somewhere along the way, a quiet arithmetic: obedience should produce ease. We do not say it aloud, and we would deny it if asked, but it governs us. So when the trial comes we do not simply suffer, we also investigate. What did I do? Is God displeased? Did I misread His will? Peter cuts the whole line of questioning off at the root. The fire came “to test you,” which means it has a purpose, and the purpose is not punishment.

Notice how thoroughly Peter had been prepared for this. He is the man who once took Jesus aside and rebuked Him for talking about suffering (Matthew 16:22), and who was told plainly that he was thinking the thoughts of men. He is also the man who heard Jesus say, “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). Peter is not theorizing here. He is writing as someone who was surprised once and never was again.

Guard a boundary gently, because it is close. This verse is not a promise that all suffering is persecution, nor a license to read every hardship as spiritual warfare. Peter will make his own distinction three verses later. And it is certainly not the notion that a faithful Christian should feel nothing. Testing that costs nothing tests nothing. Help the class see that Peter is reordering their expectations, not their nervous systems.

Land it on the room. Ask your class what they actually expected the Christian life to cost when they were baptized, and whether anyone told them. Then ask the harder one: what have you already quietly concluded about God because a trial came that you did not expect? Most people in your class have drawn that conclusion without ever saying it out loud. Verse 12 is God saying it out loud first, so they do not have to carry it alone.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The command is not to stop hurting but to stop being astonished (1 Peter 4:12)
- The trial comes “to test you,” which means it has purpose and is not punishment
- Jesus told His disciples plainly to expect persecution (John 15:20; 2 Timothy 3:12)
- Peter himself once rebuked Jesus for speaking of suffering and was corrected (Matthew 16:22)
- Against the quiet assumption that obedience should produce ease
- Not every hardship is persecution; Peter draws that line himself in verses 15 and 16

## Discussion Prompts

- What did you expect the Christian life to cost when you were baptized? Did anyone tell you?
- What have you quietly concluded about God because a trial came that you did not expect?
- Why is bewilderment more dangerous to faith than pain itself?

## Question 2

### Student Question:

*According to verse 13, believers should “rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings.” How is suffering for Christ connected to sharing in His story?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Fasten the class on the qualifier first, because it prevents a cruel misreading. Peter does not say rejoice in everything, and he does not say rejoice in suffering as such. He says “rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings.” The measure is the sharing. Cancer is not shared with Christ. A slandered reputation because you would not lie for your employer is. Ask the class to notice how carefully God speaks here. He never asks anyone to pretend that pain is pleasant. He asks them to recognize whose pain they are carrying.

Then explain the sharing, because the class will hear it as a figure of speech and it is not. The word is *koinoneo*, to have fellowship in, to hold in common. Paul uses the same idea when he says he wants to “share his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10), and when he tells the Romans that we are heirs “provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:17). The insult you take for the name of Christ is not merely similar to what He took. It is a portion of the same thing, still being poured out, and now it is landing on you.

Notice where Peter aims the joy, because he does not aim it at the present. “Rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” There are two rejoicings in the verse, and the first exists because of the second. The joy is not a feeling manufactured in the fire. It is the reasonable response of someone who knows how the story ends and can see that he is in it. Help your class see that this is not denial. It is arithmetic.

Guard the boundary here, because it is easy to slip. Sharing Christ’s sufferings does not mean adding to His atoning work. His sacrifice was once for all, finished, and needs no supplement (Hebrews 10:12-14). Nothing you endure pays for anything. What Peter describes is participation in the rejection His people receive because the world has not changed its mind about Him. We do not complete the cross. We follow the One who bore it.

Bring it home concretely. Ask each person to name the last time they took a real cost for the name of Christ, not for their own opinions or personality. If nothing comes to mind, that is worth sitting with quietly rather than rushing past. Then ask what it would mean to look at that

cost and see a family resemblance instead of an injustice. That is the whole difference between enduring and rejoicing.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The measure is “insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings,” not suffering in general (1 Peter 4:13)
- Koinoneo means to hold in common; this is participation, not mere similarity (Philippians 3:10)
- We are heirs with Christ provided we suffer with Him and are glorified with Him (Romans 8:17)
- The joy is grounded in the glory yet to be revealed, not manufactured in the present
- Sharing His sufferings adds nothing to the atonement, which was once for all (Hebrews 10:12-14)
- God never asks anyone to pretend that pain is pleasant

### **Discussion Prompts**

- When did you last take a real cost for the name of Christ, and not merely for your own opinions?
- What is the difference between enduring a cost and rejoicing in it?
- Why does Peter aim the joy at a future revealing rather than at the present moment?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*Verse 14 says, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed.” How can insults and rejection be considered a blessing, and what kind of mindset does this require?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Start by letting the class feel how strange the sentence is. Not “you will be blessed later,” and not “you are being brave.” You are blessed. Present tense, right now, while the insult is still ringing. Peter is echoing his Master, who said the same thing on a hillside: “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Matthew 5:11). Ask your class to sit with the oddness before explaining it away. Scripture calls a mocked Christian blessed, and it means it.

Then explain what makes it so, because it is not the insult. Nothing is good about being sneered at. What Peter says is that the insult, when it comes “for the name of Christ,” is evidence. It reveals where you stand. The world is not confused about you. It has correctly identified whose you are and responded accordingly. Notice how precise Peter is: it is “for the name of Christ,” not for being right, not for being clever, and not for being disagreeable. The blessing attaches to the name, and only to the name.

Notice the mindset this requires, because the question asks for it. It requires a person to stop treating the world's approval as the measuring instrument. That is harder than it sounds. Most of us have a needle inside that swings toward the good opinion of people we do not even respect. Peter is asking his readers to read that needle backwards, which is only possible if you genuinely believe there is another court, and that its verdict is the one that lasts. The apostles managed it. They left the council "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Acts 5:41).

Guard the boundary before someone walks off a cliff with this. Being disliked is not automatically a blessing, and there are Christians who have turned this verse into permission for a chip on the shoulder. If people find you insufferable, that may be the flesh and not the cross. Peter closes that door himself in verse 15 by listing "meddler" alongside "thief." The test is not whether you are being criticized. It is whether the name of Christ is the actual reason.

Land it personally and gently. Ask the class where they have gone quiet lately, and why. Most people do not deny Christ; they just get vague at the right moment, and then feel the small shame of it on the drive home. Then ask the reframing question this verse presses: if someone thought less of you this month because of Jesus, what would it mean to call that morning a blessing instead of a bad day?

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The blessing is present tense, spoken while the insult is still landing (1 Peter 4:14)
- Jesus said the same on the hillside; the reviled are called blessed (Matthew 5:11)
- The insult is not good in itself; it is evidence of whose you are
- The blessing attaches to "the name of Christ," not to being right or being disagreeable
- The apostles rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name (Acts 5:41)
- Guard against a chip on the shoulder; verse 15 lists the meddler with the thief
- This requires refusing the world's approval as the measuring instrument

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where have you gone quiet lately, and why?
- Whose good opinion do you want that you do not actually respect?
- If someone thought less of you this month because of Jesus, could you call that a blessing?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Peter mentions "the Spirit of glory and of God" resting on those who suffer for Christ (v. 14). What does this promise mean for believers enduring persecution?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Read the whole clause slowly with the class, because the logic is in the word “because.” “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” The blessing is not the insult, and it is not the endurance. It is the presence. Peter gives a reason, not a feeling. The suffering Christian is blessed because of who is with him, and that would be true on a day when he felt absolutely nothing at all.

Then notice the verb, because it carries an echo your class will love. “Rests upon you.” Isaiah said of the Messiah, “the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him” (Isaiah 11:2), and the glory of God rested on the tabernacle in the wilderness. Peter takes that language and lays it over a group of insulted, ordinary Christians in Asia Minor. Where does the glory of God settle now? Not on a building. On the people the world is currently sneering at. That is a stunning claim, and it is worth saying plainly to your class.

Now guard the boundary carefully, because this is where the lesson can go wrong. Someone will hear this as a promise of a sensation, an inner voice, a prompting, or a sign to be sought. It is none of those. Peter states a fact about who abides with a suffering saint, not an experience to chase. The miraculous confirming gifts belonged to the apostolic age; they confirmed the word while the word was being delivered, and they have ceased now that the faith has been once for all delivered (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Jude 3). God now speaks to us through the completed Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Never send a struggling Christian off to wait for a feeling. Send him to what God has already said.

Then say what the promise does secure, because it is enormous. The indwelling Spirit is given to those who have obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9-11), and He does not withdraw when things get hard. That means the mocked Christian is never handling it alone, even on the days he feels alone. This is the difference between a promise you feel and a promise you stand on. Feelings run out during long trials. Facts do not.

Bring it home where the class actually lives. Ask them what they have been waiting to feel before they believe God is with them. Most Christians have a private threshold like that, and it never gets crossed, because that is not how the promise works. Then point them back to the verse. Peter did not say the Spirit will come if you endure well enough. He said He rests on you, and he said it to people in a fire.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The blessing is grounded in a Person present, not in a feeling produced (1 Peter 4:14)
- “Rests upon” echoes the Spirit resting on the Messiah and the glory on the tabernacle (Isaiah 11:2)
- The Spirit is given to those who obey the gospel and indwells them (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9-11)
- This is not a promise of a prompting, an inner voice, or a sign to be sought
- Miraculous gifts confirmed the word in the apostolic age and have ceased (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10)

- God now guides through the completed Scriptures, once for all delivered (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Feelings run out in a long trial; the fact of His presence does not

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What have you been waiting to feel before you will believe God is with you?
- Why is a fact you can stand on better than a sensation you can chase?
- If God speaks to us now through Scripture, what does that change about how you face a hard week?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*In verses 15–16, Peter draws a sharp distinction between suffering as an evildoer and suffering as a Christian. Why is this distinction important?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Read the list out loud and let the last word land. “But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.” Three of those are crimes. The fourth is a personality. Peter has just spent three verses calling suffering Christians blessed, and then immediately, before anyone can get comfortable, he pulls the rug. Not all of it counts. A Christian can absolutely suffer and have it mean nothing whatsoever, because he brought it on himself. Ask your class why they think Peter felt the need to say this to people who were already being persecuted.

Then dwell on “meddler,” because that is the one aimed at your class. The word is rare, and it carries the sense of someone who inserts himself into affairs that are not his business, an overseer of other people’s lives. This is the church member who is difficult, intrusive, and self-appointed, and who then interprets the resulting friction as persecution. Peter files that man next to the thief. It is one of the most bracing things in the letter, and it should be said kindly and without flinching, because every congregation has felt this and few have named it.

Now show the class why the distinction matters so much. Without it, “I am being persecuted” becomes unfalsifiable, and any consequence for any behavior can be relabeled faithfulness. That is spiritually disastrous, because it makes correction impossible. Peter is handing his readers a diagnostic. Ask the plain question: am I suffering because of Jesus, or because of me? Those feel identical from the inside, and they are not remotely the same thing, and only honesty can tell them apart.

Then turn to verse 16 and notice how much weight sits on one word. “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.” The problem Peter anticipates is not fear. It is shame. These people were not mainly afraid of dying; they were embarrassed. Their families thought they had

joined something disreputable. Notice, too, that “Christian” appears only three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; here), and here it is on the lips of the enemy. It was a label they were being insulted with, and Peter tells them to glorify God in that very name.

Bring it home in both directions, because both people are in your room. To the one being genuinely mistreated for Christ, say plainly that the shame he feels is a lie, and that God calls the same moment glory. And to the one whose life is full of conflict, ask the honest question and give him room to answer it: is it possible that what you have been calling persecution is simply the bill for how you treat people? A class that can ask that of itself is a class that can be taught.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Peter refuses to bless suffering in general; the cause is everything (1 Peter 4:15)
- “Meddler” is listed alongside murderer and thief; being intrusive is not being persecuted
- Without this distinction, any consequence can be relabeled faithfulness and correction becomes impossible
- The diagnostic question: am I suffering because of Jesus, or because of me?
- The anticipated problem in verse 16 is shame, not fear
- “Christian” occurs three times in the New Testament and was first a label from outsiders (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28)
- Peter commands the insulted to glorify God in the very name used against them

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Is it possible that something you have called persecution was simply the bill for how you treated someone?
- Why does Peter put “meddler” in the same list as “thief”?
- Where do you feel embarrassed, rather than afraid, to be known as a Christian?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*What does it mean to “glorify God” in suffering (v. 16)? What does that look like in practical terms?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Start by noticing that Peter gives a command, not a coping strategy. “Let him glorify God in that name.” The alternative he has just named is shame, so glorifying God is presented as the opposite of being embarrassed. That already tells your class most of what they need. To glorify God in suffering is not to feel a certain way about it. It is to conduct yourself in a way that makes God look like what He is, at the exact moment when the watching world expects you to shrink.



Then define the word plainly, because “glorify” has gone vague in our vocabulary. To glorify is not to add glory to God, which is impossible, but to display it, to make it visible where it was not visible before. Jesus said, “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). A Christian under pressure is a lens. Everyone is looking, and what they see through him is either a God worth the cost or a man who was bluffing.

Now get concrete, because the question asks for practical terms and your class will otherwise leave with a warm haze. Glorifying God in suffering looks like refusing to lie to make it stop. It looks like not retaliating, since Peter has already said Christ “when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23). It looks like continuing to do good to the very people making it hard. It looks like saying the name of Christ out loud as the reason, rather than letting people assume you are suffering for something respectable. And it looks like not going around telling everyone how much it costs you.

Guard a boundary here, gently. This is not a call to perform, and it is not stoicism. Peter is not asking for a brave face; Scripture is full of faithful people who wept, who asked how long, and who said plainly that they were crushed (2 Corinthians 1:8). Glorifying God has never required pretending. It requires that when people look at your worst month, the thing they see is that you actually believed Him. Tears do not obscure that. Bitterness and retaliation do.

Land it on the room with something they can carry. Ask each person to name the last hard thing they went through, and then ask who watched them go through it. Somebody did. Then ask the question this verse actually presses: what did that person learn about God from watching you? That is not a guilt question. It is the plainest possible statement of what verse 16 is asking, and most of us have never once considered it.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Glorifying God is commanded as the opposite of shame (1 Peter 4:16)
- To glorify is to display God’s glory, not to add to it (Matthew 5:16)
- Christ suffered without threatening and entrusted Himself to the just Judge (1 Peter 2:23)
- Practically: refusing to lie to make it stop, refusing to retaliate, continuing to do good
- Naming Christ as the reason, rather than letting people assume it was something respectable
- This is not stoicism or performance; faithful people in Scripture wept and said they were crushed (2 Corinthians 1:8)
- The watching world learns what God is worth by watching Christians under pressure

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Who watched you go through your last hard thing? What did they learn about God from it?
- What is the difference between glorifying God in suffering and simply putting on a brave face?

- Which is harder for you: not retaliating, or not telling everyone what it cost you?

## Question 7

### Student Question:

*In verse 17, Peter says “judgment begins at the household of God.” What does this mean, and how should it shape the way believers view trials and discipline?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Read the whole verse, because half of it is usually left off and the second half is where the force is. “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” Notice that Peter says this as an explanation of the suffering. The word is “for.” The fire they are in is not random pressure; it is the beginning of God’s sifting, and it starts with His own. Ask the class to sit with that, because it is not the God most of us have imagined.

Then make sure the class knows what the household of God is, because Peter is not being poetic. Paul defines it: “the household of God, which is the church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15). Peter has already called them living stones being built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). This is the family of the saved, and it is composed of individual people who have obeyed the gospel, not of congregations stacked together. The Lord adds the saved to it when they obey (Acts 2:47). Judgment starting here means it starts with us, personally, not with some institution we belong to.

Now draw out why it starts here, and let the logic do the pastoral work. Judgment begins where the light is greatest. We are the ones who have heard, who know, who claimed the name. Amos said it to Israel: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2). Nearness to God is not insulation. It is accountability. Help the class see that this actually dignifies their trial. God is not ignoring His people; He is dealing with them first, and He does it now rather than later.

Guard the boundary here, because it runs two ways. First, do not let this become the idea that belonging to a congregation places anyone safely inside. Simon was baptized, was in the church at Samaria, and was still told his heart was not right and he was in the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:13, 23). Membership saves no one. Second, do not let the class conclude that every trial is discipline for a specific sin. Peter has already said suffering comes “to test” (v. 12), and Hebrews says God disciplines those He loves as sons (Hebrews 12:5-11). Sometimes the fire refines rather than corrects, and the class should not go home hunting for a hidden offense behind every hardship.

Then let the second half of the verse do its work, because it is a question, not a statement, and questions land differently. If this is what God’s own family passes through, “what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” Notice that phrase: not those who do

not believe it, but those who do not obey it. Ask your class to think of one person by name who has not obeyed. Then ask whether their own trial looks a little different in the light of that person's future. Peter meant for it to.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The household of God is the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5)
- The household is composed of individual saved people whom the Lord adds, not of congregations (Acts 2:47)
- Judgment begins where the light is greatest; nearness to God is accountability, not insulation (Amos 3:2)
- No one is safe by belonging; Simon was baptized, was in the church, and was lost (Acts 8:13, 23)
- Not every trial is discipline for a specific sin; some testing refines (1 Peter 4:12; Hebrews 12:5-11)
- Peter says "those who do not obey the gospel," not merely those who do not believe it (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
- The second half of the verse is a question aimed at how we see the lost

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why would God deal with His own family first rather than with the world?
- Name one person who has not obeyed the gospel. Does your trial look different beside their future?
- How do you tell the difference between God refining you and God correcting you, and does it change what you should do?

### **Question 8**

#### **Student Question:**

*Verse 18 asks, "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" What is Peter's point, and how does this put Christian suffering in perspective?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Tell the class where the sentence comes from, because it changes how they hear it. Peter is quoting Proverbs 11:31, and he is quoting it as a summary of what he just said in verse 17. The structure is the same: if this is true of the righteous, then consider the other man. Peter is not introducing a new idea. He is putting an exclamation point on the one he already made, and he is borrowing the Old Testament to do it.

Then handle "scarcely," because the whole question turns on it and it is easily misheard. The word means with difficulty, barely, not without struggle. It does not mean God is stingy with salvation, and it does not mean any saved person squeaks past by a hair. It means the road is

hard. Jesus said the gate is narrow and the way is hard, and those who find it are few (Matthew 7:13-14). Peter is describing the arriving, not the odds. The righteous do arrive. They just do not arrive comfortably, and the fire these readers are in is exactly what that difficulty looks like on a Tuesday.

Now guard both boundaries, because the class will drift one way or the other and each error is serious. On one side, this is not Calvinism, and it does not suggest that God has narrowly selected a few and left everyone else without hope. God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), and Peter himself says the Lord is “not wishing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9). The difficulty is in the road, not in God’s reluctance. On the other side, this verse is fatal to “once saved, always saved.” You cannot read “the righteous is scarcely saved” and also hold that arrival is automatic. Scarcely and guaranteed cannot both be true. Peter is writing to Christians and telling them the finish is hard.

Then let the comparison do what Peter built it to do. He does not answer his own question. “What will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” hangs there unanswered, and that is deliberate, because the unanswered version is heavier than any answer he could give. If the fire is what the saved walk through on their way home, the class should not need a description of the alternative. Ask them to finish the sentence themselves and then leave a silence.

Bring it home the way Peter intends, which is outward rather than inward. This verse is not designed to make a suffering Christian frightened about himself. It is designed to make him look up from his own trouble at the people around him who are not in the fire and are not therefore safe. Ask your class the plain thing: does your own hardship make you more compassionate toward the lost, or only more absorbed in yourself? Peter clearly expected the first.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Peter is quoting Proverbs 11:31 to summarize the argument of verse 17
- “Scarcely” means with difficulty, not that salvation is uncertain or that God is stingy
- Jesus said the gate is narrow and the way is hard (Matthew 7:13-14)
- Against Calvinism: God desires all to be saved and wishes none to perish (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
- Against “once saved, always saved”: scarcely saved and automatically saved cannot both be true
- The difficulty lies in the road, not in God’s reluctance
- Peter leaves the question unanswered on purpose, and aims it outward at the lost

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Finish Peter’s sentence yourself. What will become of the ungodly and the sinner?
- Does your own hardship make you more compassionate toward the lost, or more absorbed in yourself?

- How would you answer a friend who says that if the righteous are “scarcely” saved, no one can have assurance?

## Question 9

### Student Question:

*According to verse 19, those who suffer according to God’s will should “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” What does it mean to entrust your soul to God during difficulty?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Point out that this is the conclusion, and Peter signals it. “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” Everything since verse 12 has been building here. Notice how much is packed into one sentence: a qualification (according to God’s will), a command (entrust), an object (your souls), a reason (a faithful Creator), and a posture (while doing good). Walk the class through it slowly. This is the verse they should take home.

Then give them the word, because it is a good one. Entrust is a banking term. It means to deposit something valuable with someone for safekeeping, the way a traveler would leave money with a trusted friend before a dangerous journey. Luke uses it of Jesus on the cross: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). That is the picture. The suffering Christian is not gritting his teeth. He is making a deposit, and the whole question is whether the bank is sound. Peter answers that in the next phrase.

Notice why he calls God “a faithful Creator,” because Peter could have chosen any title and this one is odd here. Not Father, not Judge, not Savior. Creator. He is reminding people whose lives are being taken apart that the One holding their souls is the One who made them in the first place. He knows what they are, He knows what they can bear, and He has never yet failed anything He made. This is the only place in the New Testament God is called that, and Peter put it in a verse about suffering on purpose.

Now guard the boundary, because this is where it can turn passive. Entrusting is not resignation, and it is not waiting for God to hand you a feeling of peace. Peter attaches a participle to it: “while doing good.” The deposit is made with the hands still moving. The Christian who entrusts his soul keeps showing up, keeps serving, keeps blessing the people making it hard, and keeps obeying. Sanctification is God’s work through His word, and we genuinely cooperate with it (Philippians 2:12-13). This verse is the shape of that cooperation. Trust God with the outcome; take responsibility for the obedience.

Land it personally. Ask your class what they are currently trying to hold and protect themselves, white-knuckled, that this verse says to deposit. Reputation is the usual answer. Then ask the second half, which is the harder half: what good work have you stopped doing because the trial

gave you a reason to stop? Peter joins those two things in a single sentence, and most of us have separated them.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Verse 19 is the conclusion of the whole passage, signaled by “therefore”
- The qualification matters: those who suffer “according to God’s will”
- “Entrust” is a banking word, to deposit for safekeeping, as Jesus did on the cross (Luke 23:46)
- God is called “a faithful Creator,” the only place in the New Testament, in a verse about suffering
- Entrusting is not resignation; the deposit is made “while doing good”
- The Christian genuinely cooperates with God’s work in him (Philippians 2:12-13)
- Trust God with the outcome; take responsibility for the obedience

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What are you white-knuckling right now that this verse tells you to deposit?
- What good work have you stopped doing because a trial gave you a reason to stop?
- Why do you think Peter called God “Creator” here rather than Father or Savior?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Looking at 1 Peter 4:12-19 as a whole, how does this passage equip believers to face suffering without shame and with enduring faith?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Have the class assemble the argument, because the sequence is the point. Do not be surprised (v. 12). Rejoice as you share His sufferings (v. 13). You are blessed, because the Spirit rests on you (v. 14). Do not suffer as an evildoer, but if as a Christian, do not be ashamed (vv. 15-16). Judgment begins with us, and consider the alternative (vv. 17-18). Therefore entrust your souls while doing good (v. 19). Notice the movement: from expectation, to participation, to identity, to honesty, to perspective, to action. Peter does not comfort them and stop. He hands them a way to stand.

Then name what Peter never does, because it is striking and your class will not notice unless you point it out. He never promises the fire will end. He never explains why God allowed it. He never tells them it will make sense later. Every instinct we have for consoling people is absent from this passage. What he gives them instead is a place to stand while it burns, and apparently God considers that better than an explanation. Ask the class why that might be.

Draw out how shame actually gets defeated here, since the lesson is titled for it. Shame is not answered by being told to feel better about yourself. It is answered by a change of category. Peter takes the same insult that made them want to hide and shows them what it actually is: fellowship with Christ, evidence of the Spirit's presence, the household of God being dealt with first, and a soul safe in the hands of a faithful Creator. Nothing about their circumstances changed in eight verses. Everything about what those circumstances meant did.

Keep the class from a sentimental reading, because the passage will not allow it. The word "meddler" is in here. So is "scarcely saved." So is a question about the fate of the disobedient that Peter refuses to answer. This is not a warm passage. It is a bracing one, written by a man who would himself die for the name, to people he expected to keep suffering. Endurance in this chapter is not a mood. It is a decision made repeatedly by people who have run out of other reasons and still have this one.

End with the mirror, and make it specific. First: where has shame, not fear, been quietly steering you? Most compromise in your class is not cowardice; it is embarrassment. Second: what would change on Monday if you genuinely believed the Spirit of glory rests on you? And third, the one Peter aims at: name the good you will keep doing anyway, even though the trial has not lifted, because that is what verse 19 actually asks and it is available to everyone in the room.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The passage moves from expectation, to participation, to identity, to honesty, to perspective, to action
- Peter never promises the fire will end and never explains why God allowed it
- God gives His people a place to stand rather than an explanation
- Shame is defeated by a change of category, not by improved feelings about oneself
- The circumstances do not change in these eight verses; their meaning entirely does
- The passage forbids a sentimental reading; it contains "meddler," "scarcely saved," and an unanswered question
- Endurance here is a repeated decision, not a mood (1 Peter 4:19)

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where has shame, rather than fear, been quietly steering you?
- What would change on Monday if you genuinely believed the Spirit of glory rests on you?
- Name the good you will keep doing anyway, even though the trial has not lifted.

### **Question 11**

#### **Student Question:**

*Now or Later-- Reflect on these passages: Acts 5:40-42 — The apostles rejoice in suffering for Christ; Romans 8:17-18 — Suffering now, glory later; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 — Treasure in jars of clay*

## **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Use these three as a way of showing the class that 1 Peter 4 is not an isolated word from one apostle in a hard mood. It is the settled mind of the New Testament. If your time is short, take Acts 5 and let it stand alone, because it is the passage that turns Peter's theology into a photograph. If you have room, walk all three, and let the class see the same conviction coming from three directions.

Acts 5:40-42 is Peter himself, living what he later wrote. The apostles are beaten and charged not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then this: "Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." Notice the exact overlap with 1 Peter 4:14 and 16. The name, the dishonor, the rejoicing. Peter is not asking his readers to do something he has not done. And notice what they did next, in verse 42: "every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus." That is 1 Peter 4:19 in action. Entrusting, while doing good.

Romans 8:17-18 supplies the arithmetic behind the joy. Paul says we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." Two things for your class to see. First, that little word "provided" is a condition, and it quietly refutes the idea that inheritance is automatic once believed. Second, verse 18 is the scale: "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Paul is not saying the suffering is small. He is saying the glory is that large.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 gives the class the picture they will remember. "We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." Then the honest rhythm: afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, struck down but not destroyed. Guard the boundary here, gently. Paul does not pretend. He says elsewhere he was so burdened he despaired of life itself (2 Corinthians 1:8). The clay is genuinely cracked. That is the design, because the cracks are how the light gets out, and everyone can then tell whose power it was.

Bring the three together and land it. The apostles rejoiced, Paul weighed, and both kept working. Ask your class where they are in that, honestly, and then ask the question these passages share: what is the treasure worth to you, in a currency you have actually paid this year? These texts are not asking anyone to enjoy the fire. They are asking whether Christ is worth it, and all three answer yes from inside the flames.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Acts 5:41 matches 1 Peter 4:14 and 16 exactly: the name, the dishonor, the rejoicing
- The apostles kept teaching daily after being beaten, which is 1 Peter 4:19 in action (Acts 5:42)
- "Provided we suffer with him" is a condition; inheritance is not automatic (Romans 8:17)
- Paul does not minimize the suffering; he magnifies the glory (Romans 8:18)



- The treasure is in jars of clay so the surpassing power is seen to be God's (2 Corinthians 4:7)
- Paul is honest about being crushed and despairing at times (2 Corinthians 1:8; 4:8-9)
- All three passages answer the same question from inside the fire: Christ is worth it

#### **Discussion Prompts**

- What is the treasure worth to you, in a currency you have actually paid this year?
- Why did the apostles go straight back to preaching the day after they were beaten?
- If the glory is that large, what does that do to the size of what you are carrying now?