

"The Attack of Satan on the Church"

I Peter 4: *12 Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But **rejoice** insofar **as you share Christ's sufferings**, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 **If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.** 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, **let him not be ashamed**, but let him **glorify God in that name.** 17 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? 18 And*

*“If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”*

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Introduction: I would like to share with you the most stupid prayer I ever prayed!

Way back in 1976 as I was finishing my internship for ministry I remember getting on my knees and praying,

“Jesus, do whatever you have to do to make me like you!”

“I was kidding, Jesus took me seriously.”

Over the past thirty-four years I have gone through more pain, more struggles, more opposition, more humiliation than I ever expected.

During that time I had a choice-either to become bitter at all the difficulties of my life or to become stronger as a result.

At Hope we also have a choice.

To either become bitter by the attacks that have come our way or to become stronger for the real battle of life-the battle for the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Remember: *12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*

Notice the Key words that we are called to obey:

“do not be surprised at the fiery trial!” Expect it! It is normal.

When you stand for the truth evil goes crazy and attacks.

There is nothing strange about the fiery trial we are facing just as there is no mystery to gravity taking over when you step off a cliff.

What does Peter tell us to do when the attack comes?

Rejoice!!!! “Hip hip hurray!”

Is Peter kidding? No one likes pain.

Why rejoice in pain? BECAUSE you get to share in the sufferings of Jesus!

Suffering is normal for the church around the world and throughout the past 2000 years.

Today, around the world, more Christians are suffering for their faith than at any other time in history.

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN: Over 20 Afghan Christians have been detained in Afghanistan after high-level leaders called for the arrest and

execution of converts to Christianity in the Islamic nation, an advocacy group said Friday, June 25.

Britain-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide said the Christians were detained since last week and added that non-Christians with ties to Westerners have also been targeted for interrogation.

ABUJA, NIGERIA ([Worthy News](#))-- Muslim extremists destroyed several churches and a pastor's house in the latest religious violence to hit Nigeria's northern Kano state, church representatives and rights activists said Friday, May 21.

One of the buildings and the pastors house were set ablaze on the premises of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) at Kwasam, in the Kiru Local Government area, while another building under construction was demolished, the church said.

MOSCOW, RUSSIA: The second murder of a Russian priest in as many months has prompted a call by the Orthodox Church for Russians to think about their country's spiritual and moral condition.

Tuesday's shooting death of 39-year-old priest Alexander Filippov.

Last month Vitaly Zubkov, was kicked and beaten, just days after the murder of his friend, Father Daniil Sysoyev in Moscow. Sysoyev had received death threats for his outspoken criticism of Islam and attempts to convert Muslims to Christianity.

Dearborn, Michigan: Three young Christians were arrested for talking to people about Jesus at the annual Arab Fest in Dearborn, Michigan June 15th. The muslim crowd jeered them and told them they had no right to speak about Jesus.

Vs 16 reminds us . *16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

If we suffer for the name of Jesus we have nothing to be ashamed of.

Suffering is the primary tool for glorifying God the Father because of the name of Jesus.

Christians have suffered for 2000 years.

However in the last fifty years through the false teaching of televangelists, evangelical leaders and health and wealth proponents Christianity has become soft and indifferent to standing up for Jesus in the public arena and facing the hatred and lies that come as a result.

Biblical Truth: If we stand up for Jesus we will suffer and if we endure through it we will glorify his name.

17 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?

The first purpose of judgment (in the form of persecution) is to purify the church so that it will be able to witness to the lost.

Why judgment? To make us stronger, tougher, more intentional in our witness, and to fully understand the reality and nature of evil.

When we suffer we either become **bitter or bolder.**

Christians need to be tough, articulate, Christ-centered and unrelenting in speaking to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I have worked out with weights and exercise all my life.

(I know what your thinking! That's hard to imagine!)

There is an old statement in exercise and weightlifting:

NO PAIN NO GAIN!

Unfortunately that's true!

If judgment begins with the household of God then rejoice because his judgment will make us stronger, make us like Jesus.

But, this judgment, it is also a warning to those who ignore Jesus.

The pain we now suffer is for our good.

The pain those who reject Jesus experience is condemnation.

If God sends trials to the church now, this is evidence that He will someday judge the lost.

We have our trials now and our glory later; the lost have their glory now and their suffering later.

The only heaven the lost sinner will know is on earth today!

One day, a fiery judgment will overtake the whole world (2Pe 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16).

Meanwhile, God's judgment begins "at the house of God," the church (1Pe 2:5).

This truth ought to motivate us to be as pure and obedient as possible (see Ezekiel 9 for an OT illustration of this truth).

Peter regards the persecutions of the believers as a **divinely permitted purging** of His suffering saints, which in turn is merely a slight glimpse of the awful ordeal awaiting the ungodly!

14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

If you are insulted....

The “if” carries the idea of “**since**” in the Greek — “Since you are insulted.”

These Christians were in the process of being insulted for the name of Christ.

No Christian should be surprised that people laugh at him/her because of their faith.

The favorite words of Christians who stand for the truth are:

haters, intolerant, stupid, ignorant, fundamentalist, homophobic, racists, bigots, and more.

Ridicule is part and parcel of the Christian life.

This is persecution of slander and of the tongue. “Insulted: means *defame, disparage.*

Insult is verbal abuse by disparagement because of our testimony.

Someone puts us down because of our faith.

People who share their faith will experience verbal attack.

“for the name of Christ”

“Name” refers to all that Christ **represents**.

Our name represents us.

If we write a check or note that name represents our person and character.

When we witness and live for Jesus we represent HIM.

Everything we are and everything we do we represent Jesus’ name.

“blessed *are you*”

When insult because of our testimony comes our way, God gives us a **special** blessing.

God gives us a special power when we face insult for our faith.

“Blessed” means *a well ordered soul* (1 Peter 3:14; Matthew 5:11). Suffering for Christ is no penalty, it is a **privilege**.

“Blessed” does not mean happy. Happiness depends on circumstances and circumstances depend on chance.

People who depend on chance happiness as the basis for their orientation do not operate on God’s principles.

These people are shallow and unstable.

A blessed person is someone whose **state of soul** is neither produced nor affected by outside circumstances.

A well-ordered soul comes from God and is stable in times of opposition.

“for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

There are many **titles** for the Holy Spirit in the Bible but this is the only place where he is called “the Spirit of glory.”

In other places the New Testament calls him the “Spirit of truth,” the “Spirit of life,” the “Spirit of Christ,” the “Spirit of God,” the “Spirit of the Father,” the “Spirit of adoption.”

“The Spirit of glory and of God” refers to the Holy Spirit’s divine presence with us.

He bestows glory on us.

He fights Holy War for us.

The idea is that God is glorified in those who suffer for his name (John 12:23; 13:31) and permit him to defend him.

“Rests upon you” refers to his **indwelling** of Christians.

This means the Holy Spirit works with us in these situations.

Christians can rest in the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit when they share their faith and are opposed.

When we suffer for Jesus, for doing what is right we do so with trust in Jesus that he will take these bad circumstance and make us more like him.

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

“therefore”

The “therefore” indicates that this is a **summary statement** for Christians in suffering.

This is the punch line of this section of 1 Peter.

This is the application of all this teaching on trials.

If Christians are not to retaliate what are they to do?

Commit themselves to the Lord.

let those who suffer

Nothing that comes our way arrives by accident (1 Peter 2:20; 3:17).

God is never caught off guard.

Although he does not cause evil, he knows how to take the evil of others, including magazine articles, and turn them around for his glory.

Evil has it's moment but Jesus Christ has the final word.

according to the will of God

The words “according to” mean norm or standard.

Our suffering must be according to the norm or standard of the will of God.”Will” means *purpose, plan or design*.

Therefore not all suffering is the Lord will or by his design.

A fair amount of the suffering in my life comes from my stupidity.

If I let my anger take over and yell at someone I in turn will get yelled at. I cannot then call that suffering for Christ.

In fact I am suffering because of my stupidity.

Suffering according to the will of God means suffering for doing what is right, what is true, what witness to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

commit their souls

“Commit” is an accounting term meaning *to deposit*.

“Commit” carries the ideas of giving or *handing over to another, transmitting*.

We give over our money to the bank.

When we give our money to a bank, we put it in charge of keeping it for us.

If we **deposit** our souls with God, He will undertake the superintendence of our souls.

When we do this we are no longer in control, He is.

In I Peter 5:7 he says: “Cast all our care on the Lord”

We cannot solve all our problems ourselves.

It is God’s desire that we deposit our trials to His care and charge.

to a faithful Creator

We can trust God to be **true** and **reliable** (1 John 1:9).

We can place our full confidence in Him because He is **worthy** of our belief and trust.

God is dependable and reliable.

“He who calls you *is* **faithful**, who also will do *it*” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

“Faithful Creator” points to His **promises** and **character**.

God will fulfill his promises without fail.

Men make promises they cannot keep because they are neither dependable nor able to carry them out.

As our Creator, God is responsible to maintain what He created.

He is dependable. We can “bank” on him.

in doing good

The term “doing good” means to **benefit** others.

When we actively live out the Christian life, even under extreme duress, we benefit others.

God uses our commitment to Him to bless others.

He will do something good with our lives when we deposit them with Him.

Good orientation to others implies the acceptance of God’s sovereignty in our lives.

Conclusion: There are many other things we could say about Satan’s attacks the local church

Over the past three years I have been repeating the Lord's word to Hope. Love me, make disciples, get ready for the fire to come.

We must brace ourselves for all forms of attack. This is not the first and it will not be the last.

We must stand together in prayer, in love, in commitment, in sacrifice.

When we stand together in Christ we will not fall because the Lord will be there with us.

Yellow Card:

_____ This week I will take the time to look deep within to see where I often betray myself and Jesus.

_____ I refuse to become depressed or seek pity when I am attacked for doing the right things.

_____ I proclaim before this church and the angels of heaven that I will trust and cling to Jesus when attacked or ridiculed for believing Jesus and his Word.