

FIRST PETER 4:12-14 "You Shall See The Glory Of The Lord Rest On You"

Last week we ended with Peter giving a blessing to his readers in the words, "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1PE 4:11)

In other words everything we do as unto the Lord, whether it's speaking on His behalf or serving on His behalf, we should do it in a way that realizes His strength is what we need and His glory is what we should be promoting.

We are His people and our desire should be to do His work so that others might come to know the living God through Jesus Christ. These are exciting times we live in. God desires to use each one of us for a very special purpose and He simply wants us willing to follow where He leads as we seek Him continually.

But in these times, as well as the times in which Peter wrote, as we are willing to love and serve God, there will always be people who will try and discredit what God is doing in this world through the lives of His people.

Most Christians who live their faith in the real world, instead of trying to hide it in the closet, will eventually run into someone who wants to put them down or make fun of them or try and create doubts concerning their faith and the God who gives life through Christ.

Back in the early 70's it was not uncommon for people to refer to young hippies, who just recently came to faith in Christ, as "Jesus Freaks". I can remember being on the campus' of the University of Fla., as well as Santa Fe Community college in Gainseville around 1973, and having people argue with me because I was passing tracts out and they wanted to show me how no one with any amount of intelligence could ever believe that stuff found in the Bible.

Around 1974 I had an anthropology class at Fla. Atlantic University in Boca Raton, and on more than one occasion I would confront the professor, who was always promoting evolution in the class. I wasn't trying to be a jerk about it, but I felt it necessary for

the sake of the other students to bring in scientific facts which showed that evolution was not a valid scientific model for beginnings, but that science actually could support the biblical model of creation by God.

I remember after class one day some guy came up to me and asked why I was trying to be a trouble maker. My response was, I thought college was a place for higher learning and that learning involved engaging our own minds instead of believing everything someone else told us without asking questions when valid points could be made for a differing opinion.

There were other students who appreciated a different point of view and they enjoyed looking at the scientific evidence from a different perspective. My point is that by and large, the world wants to view life from its own perspective instead of Gods perspective.

And that shouldn't surprise anyone because the spirit of the world is at odds with God. The very nature of man wants to rebel against his Creator. In fact Paul speaks of this attitude in 1CO 2:14 "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

And so, it's not simply a matter of intelligence, or lack thereof, when it comes to accepting or rejecting the things of God. Some of the most intelligent men and women in the world have embraced Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And others, who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, might be labeled as "simple", which is probably where most of us would fit.

But, whether we're brainiacs like Michael Faraday, the father of modern electrical science and believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, or a humble fisherman like the apostle Peter, we must acknowledge that we would have no desire or need to seek the Creator, Lord and Savior of this world had He not opened our eyes to our need for a Redeemer.

But in following our Lord the world will make it clear that no matter your status or educational background you will still be seen as one who is out of touch and in many cases the world will spread its venom your way. Peter puts it aptly in our text this morning.

1 Peter 4:12-14 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.

Our text this morning addresses the different aspects of following Christ as we step out in faith and faithfully represent our God in this world, understanding that the intelligence of man is not the problem when it comes to God, it's the heart of man which needs to be changed.

These Christians in the first century also were being ridiculed for their faith. Many of them were accused of being intellectually deficient as well as seen as traitors to the gods of their fathers. And because of that some, not all, were experiencing what Peter refers to as fiery ordeals.

The NIV uses the term painful trial. The Greek word used here is *Purosis* and it means "ignition" as in smelting where great heat is used to melt metals. Figuratively it's to show the kind of fire which tests the metal and proves its strength.

And so, what Peter is saying is that some of these trials you're experiencing, for representing Christ, are meant to test you and prove your faith and in the process glorify God who gives you the strength to go through such a test.

And that's why Peter says don't be surprised at such fiery ordeals because it's part of the normal process of sanctification to help you mature in Christ. It's designed by God Himself to make you the kind of servant who is able to stand firm when the heat's turned up.

In fact, Peter starts this letter in just this way.

1PE 1:3-7 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved

genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

The kind of gospel that's often preached today is given in such a way that it excludes all normal activity in life that is designed by God to help you grow. That kind of gospel which excludes the reality of life, being used by God to mold us in the image of Christ, is more akin to the surreal world of Alice in Wonderland.

And when many of these people who have been told that being a Christian is like spending the rest of their lives in some sort of spiritual Disney World they become very disillusioned and often turn away from God when they discover the real world of Christianity is not like that at all.

The real world of Christianity is a life of faith in God who has purchased our salvation as He experienced the greatest of trials by dying in our place on a cross reserved for criminals. An injustice done to our guiltless Savior, Jesus Christ, secures our salvation.

And just as the world hated Jesus, so too, as Peter intimates, the world will hate God's people in Christ. This is not to suggest that at every turn in life people will be wanting to destroy us and that there is no joy and happiness in being a Christian. Just the opposite.

Most people in the world respond favorably to Christians who are usually the most moral and civil people in any society. But it's when we give God's message of hope, which goes out from us both in word and deed, that the world is confronted with a choice. And when that choice is to reject Christ they sometimes react in a way that may turn into a trial for Christians.

But trials are always meant by God to be used to strengthen our faith, not tear it down unless we allow such trials to tear us down as we look away from God and look to the trial instead.

Our joy doesn't rest primarily in this present life. Rather our joy is found in the hope we have in Christ and the reality that we will spend eternity with Him and also knowing that He is with us today to enable us to live the rest of this life for the will of God.

That doesn't mean we don't find any joy in this world and the beauty of this creation which God made, it simply means that we approach life with a real understanding that this is not our home. It may not be Disney World but it is a place we can still enjoy as we glory in the life we have in Christ, as we take that joy into our

world and live it to God's glory, desiring to see others come into a personal relationship with the living God.

It's a joy, in Christ, which can overcome the heartaches of this world. It's a joy which can look beyond the difficulties of this world and look by faith to the God who has prepared a place for us to live with Him for eternity. A place where there is no more heartache, no more pain, no more disappointments, nor more death.

And this is what is intimated when Peter encourages us in **1 Peter 4:13** keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

The revelation of His glory is describing that last day in which Christ will return and raise His people to glory in the resurrection.

John 6:39 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

This is the time to which we must look in comfort, knowing that the Lord will come for us just as He promised His disciples the day He ascended back to the Father as they then received the promise from the angel that He would return in the same He way He left.

This is what Paul shared with the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

This is the same event that Paul shared with the Corinthians when explaining the resurrection which, again, will take place at the last day which is associated with the last trumpet.

1 Corinthians 15:51-55 ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS

SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

It is on this last day that we in Christ will be raised bodily and gloriously to enter into the eternal kingdom of God that God will refashion for us on that last day. And Peter talks of this as well when describing the new heavens and new earth in his second letter.

2 Peter 3:10-13 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

What Peter wants us to do is to put this life into perspective and to live in the joy of our salvation with the understanding that though this world will sometimes cause us grief, precisely because of our faith in Christ, don't lose heart because the future is right around the corner and by all means don't let the trials of this life take you by surprise but rather realize that you are actually sharing in the very thing Christ experienced.

That's what Peter says in 1PE 4:13 "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." Again, the NIV misses a very important point which the Greek makes clear and the NKJV and the NAS point out in their translations.

The NAS reads: "but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing;"

The point is that not everyone of Peter's readers were experiencing this kind of persecution to the same degree. Some were not experiencing it at all. But to those who were he wants to comfort them. He wants them to understand that because some of them were being persecuted for their faith while others weren't, don't think it's an oddity in their relationship with Christ.

In fact, he points out that it's a privilege to experience the same suffering as their Savior. That's not meant to be taken as a

masochistic attitude, but rather to understand that though persecution for the sake of Christ may not be a pleasant experience, at just the right time, God's grace is going to be there for you just as it was for Jesus when He was in this world specifically to bring us to Himself.

And Peter knew what he was talking about. Peter was arrested on various occasions for being a servant of Christ. And on one occasion he and John were arrested for preaching the gospel and they stood in front of the Jewish religious leaders and Gamaliel persuaded to let them go.

We read in ACT 5:38-41 "Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." 40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."

Were they rejoicing in the fact that they had been whipped? No, they were rejoicing that they were able to stand for Christ and even suffer the same things Jesus did, knowing that only because they stood for Christ were they even put in that situation.

Willaim Barclay makes an interesting point about this. He says, "A man's devotion to a principle can be measured by his willingness to suffer for it; therefore, any kind of persecution is a test of a man's faith. But it is equally true that it is only the real Christian who will be persecuted. The Christian who compromises with the world will not be persecuted. In a double sense persecution is the test of the reality of a man's faith."

That's why Peter was rejoicing when he and John were flogged. They realized that their faith was true and that the grace of God was really with them which is the promise that He would never leave them or forsake them. They knew they belonged to Him and that He was their God and protector.

Peter goes so far as to say in our text: 1PE 4:14 "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

Here Peter explains that most persecution comes in the form of verbal abuse rather than physical abuse. To be insulted carries with it the idea that someone wants to put you down because of your faith in Christ.

But notice what Peter says of the person who is placed in such a situation and rests in the power of the Holy Spirit to be with him in that particular situation. Peter says, "you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

The idea of being blessed carries with it that God is the One blessing and God is the One who is able to bless and comfort even in such a situation. But what's interesting about this phrase "the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" carries a very powerful image of the reality of God working in and through you in such times.

Again, William Barclay says this. "The Jews had the conception of the Shekinah, the luminous glow of the very presence of God. This conception constantly recurs in the O.T. "In the morning", said Moses, "you shall see the glory of the Lord." (Exo.16:7). "The glory of the Lord settled upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days," when the law was being delivered to Moses (Exo.24:16).

..... In the tabernacle God was to meet with Israel and it was to be sanctified with His glory (Exo.29:43). When the tabernacle was completed, "then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exo.40:34).

..... When the ark of the covenant was brought into Solomon's temple, "a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1Kings 8:10,11). Repeatedly, this idea of the Shekinah, the luminous glory of God, occurs in the O.T.

..... It is Peter's conviction that something of that glow of glory rests on the man who suffers for Christ. When Stephen was on trial for his life and it was certain that he would be condemned to death, to those who looked on him his face was as the face of an angel (Acts 6:15)"

What Peter is saying is that the glory of God, His Shekinah, His power, rests on those who are called upon by God to demonstrate His life in us and to glorify Him in the process. The Greek word

for rest upon is *anapauo* and it means to repose or remain upon and by implication to refresh.

The Holy Spirit is given to us to do just that, to refresh us, to build us up. We read in ACT 3:19-20 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you -even Jesus."

God is the One who refreshes us in the Spirit. He is the One who gives strength when we become weak, and He is the One who empowers when He calls upon us to go forward to do His work. The glory of the Spirit of God surrounds His people and enables us to be those witnesses both in word and deed.

This is the joy Peter speaks of in the midst of suffering for Christ, and even suffering trials of any kind, because of spiritual warfare we may be experiencing in our lives. You see, more often than not what opposition we get from people, because we stand for Him, is often a device used by the enemy to try and defeat us in this spiritual war.

EPH 6:10-13 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

We have been given spiritual life in Christ and often we find ourselves in spiritual battle. But the Spirit of glory and of God rests on us. Rejoice that God is actively involved in your life and rejoice that you are being used by our awesome God to accomplish His will in this world as we represent Him faithfully in this world.

You've been give life in Christ, you've been give power in Christ to take His love into this world and be soldiers of the cross in a way where we don't have to cower every time a trial comes our way. Rather, we can stand firm against the devils schemes and go forward for God's purposes to His glory.

We live in a temporal world. Don't let the temporal thwart the eternal work God is doing in your life and wants to do in the lives of so many other people as God uses you in their lives.

Be strong in the Spirit as you hold fast to the hope you have in Christ by faith. I like the way Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth and I pray the words given him by the Holy Spirit encourage you as well.

1CO 1:4-9 "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way - in all your speaking and in all your knowledge - 6 because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."