

1 Peter Chapter 4 v 12 - 19

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[0 : 00] We thank you, O Lord our God, that though we cannot see your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, ascended in his glory, we know that he is there.

We know that he is there because we know that he has passed through death. We know that he is there because he has paid for our sins, purchased us for God. We know that he is there because, Lord Jesus, hell could not hold you, death could not keep you.

Lord, you had to rise again from the dead and you had to return to your Father because it was from heaven you came as that helpless babe, from heaven you came as that servant king, from heaven you came to fulfill your mission, to fulfill the purpose, the will, the plan of God the Father, to rescue and save your people.

And once that work was finished, when that work was completed, once you had declared it is finished. We know that it was only a matter of time before you had to return and be restored to your rightful place.

That place where you receive the worship and the praise of all the angelic hosts. That place where all the saints who've gone before us enjoy the radiance of your love and your face and worship you day and night ceaselessly, tirelessly.

[1 : 21] We know that you are there, Lord Jesus, because we know that you've given us your Holy Spirit. You promised us another comforter, a counsellor, a helper.

We thank you that he has come and he continues to work in our hearts and lives day by day. Without him, O Lord, without his help, without his grace, without his strength, then we could not take one step further forward.

We could not, O Lord, live for you or seek your face or pray. We would be utterly lost and helpless. We know that you are there, Lord Jesus, because we know you're coming again.

Coming again in glory and power. Coming again to judge the living and the dead. Coming to take your people to yourself. Coming again, O Lord, to bring to full culmination, a full climax, the whole of history, the whole of time, bringing, O Lord, that new heavens and new earth in which righteousness lives, where there should be no more sin or sorrow or shame.

We know, Lord Jesus, that you are there because you continue to hear our prayers, continue to sustain us and help us day by day through all the trials and difficulties and the sufferings of life.

[2 : 33] We thank you, Lord Jesus, that we are going to be there with you one day too. We thank you that we shall be seated with you in glory. We thank you that we shall share in all the treasures of heaven for all eternity.

Because you are there, we shall be there. Nothing in heaven or earth or hell can prevent your people, those whom you love and those for whom you died, from being there with you. And we thank you for that assurance and confidence we have.

For that reason, we come to worship and praise you this evening. We come as those, O Lord, who are dear to you because you are dear to us. We come to you, O Lord, the Savior who rules over heaven and earth.

We come to you and ask, O Lord, be with us. Help us. Speak to us. Bless us. Make your word alive to our minds and hearts. Equip us, Lord, that we might be those people you would want us to be in this world at this time.

You have called us to yourself, but you've left us here. You've given us a mission and a work to do in this world, to be salt and light, to be those who bear your image to a dark and godless and evil world.

[3 : 41] You've left us here, O Lord, to do your work and for you to work in us and through us to fulfill your purposes in the saving of your church.

O Lord, help us now. Strengthen us and encourage us now in this time as we give to you our thanks and praise for Jesus, the one whose head is crowned with glory and the one we long to see and shall see in the coming days.

Amen. The first letter of Peter, where we've been for a few months, and we're getting nearer towards the end. We're in chapter 4, and we're going to be looking at this evening, God willing, verses 12 to 19, the last section of 1 Peter.

Peter's letter is written to various groups of Christians in the first century. We've told a little bit about them in the first few verses. They all had one thing in common. They were all being persecuted. They were all facing great opposition in a world which was against them. And so Peter has written words of great encouragement to them, to help them, to encourage them, to continue in the Lord, reminding them of who they are, that they are God's chosen people, that they are precious in his sight.

[4 : 59] Reminding them that they have been rescued by God out of the world and that they are to live in this world as, he puts it, sojourners, exiles, strangers. And that means that their life is to be very different and their attitude is very different for the people around about them.

And so he's given them instruction about how they are to respond to the authorities, the civil authorities that they face, how they respond in the workplace, how they are to live in their marriages, how they are to live in their lives together.

And we saw those words particularly in verse 8 of chapter 3. Finally, all of you be like-minded, talking to the church. And how we just respond really to people who are against us and to recognize again that Jesus is our example.

So we're going to pick up from verse 12 to verse 19, this last section particularly that deals with persecution and suffering. The NIV begins with the words, dear friends, but the greeting is far more tender than that.

The AV is, in that sense, superior, beloved, beloved. Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

[6 : 22] But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed.

For the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler.

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed. But praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household.

And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good. So we're in 1 Peter, and as we read before, chapter 4, verses 12 to 19.

[7 : 38] Do you like surprises? Not everyone does. Of course, that can be because we can have both pleasant surprises and we can have unpleasant surprises.

But it can be that we don't like surprises because we like to feel in control of every situation. Even the thought of a surprise birthday party would cause us to run and hide.

Being forewarned of a surprise can spoil it if it's a pleasant surprise. But being forewarned of an unpleasant surprise can help us to cope when we experience it.

Peter's letter, as I said before, is written to prepare and equip the believers and us as well for those unpleasant surprises. Those unpleasant surprises that we meet as we live godly lives in an ungodly world.

He writes, as always, with a heart of love, compassion and care for those to whom he is writing. We see that there, verse 12. Dear friends, beloved, as I said, is the best way to interpret that.

[8 : 47] He's used that phrase before, early on in chapter 2 and verse 11. Dear friends, beloved. His heart is for them. His heart is towards them because, as he says later on, he's one with them in so many ways.

These believers to whom he is writing, these first century believers, are people who've experienced very unpleasant surprises in their Christian life.

Peter calls them here fiery ordeals. Earlier on in chapter 1, he's called them all kinds of trial that bring us grief. Verse 6.

They're one and the same thing. Because they are linked together with this illustration of fire. There in verse 7 of chapter 1, he speaks of us being refined like gold in the fire.

And here, fiery ordeals as well that come to test you. It's the same experiences he's talking about. The same difficulties. The same trials.

[9 : 48] These ordeals. These trials are particularly due to the fact that the people outside of the church, the people outside the believing community, are reacting violently and aggressively towards them.

The believers are being persecuted. Being persecuted by individuals. People who they live amongst. People that they live in in community. In chapter 3. In chapter 3.16, he speaks about those who speak maliciously against your good behavior.

In chapter 4 and verse 4, we saw the other week that he speaks about those who heap abuse on you because you don't join in with their sinful practice.

And earlier on in chapter 2 and verse 12, he speaks of those who are the pagans. Pagan really in the Greek is the same word from which we get ethnic.

Ethnos. It means Gentiles. It's another translation of the word. Those who are of the world. But not only are they getting persecution, insults, being spoken maliciously about by people who are around about, that they have communion with or they have community with, but also they're being opposed by authorities.

[11 : 09] They're facing persecution from the governing powers who are bringing judgments against them. Notice there in chapter 2 verse 12, how he speaks about though they accuse you of doing wrong.

Accusation speaks very much of the courtroom, doesn't it? And also how they're being brought, it seems, in verse 15 to account and suffering, not as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal. Again, they're being brought, it seems, before tribunals and courts as they were all the way through the time of Acts.

But, says Peter to them, none of these things, this opposition, this persecution from people in your family, perhaps people around about you, from the world around about you, even the governments and civil authorities, none of these things should surprise you.

Do not be surprised. By that, Peter doesn't just mean you should expect that as a Christian you will be persecuted. But he's saying more than that, he's saying don't be taken aback by these things.

[12 : 15] Don't be knocked off your feet. Don't be shocked. Don't be disturbed in your faith. Don't be rocked by what's going on. It shouldn't surprise them that they are being persecuted.

It is the universal experience of every Christian in every age, but particularly here in the first century. In chapter 5 and verse 9, he reminds them that they are to resist Satan and stand firm in the faith because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

They weren't just a small group who were being persecuted. Everybody else was having a great time of it. They were sharing in the sufferings that every believer in every age experiences.

Now, in the UK, of course, we have been blessed, if we can use that phrase, by a very long time of freedom from persecution.

At least severe, large-scale persecution, which our forefathers did know in this country some generations past. And there is, of course, as we're finding, an increasing opposition to biblical Christianity.

[13 : 28] Christians are losing their jobs because of their stand upon same-sex marriage, other biblical truths. But in reality, whatever we endure, it may be from insults again, people speaking maliciously of us in the workplace, in the home, or wherever it may be.

The reality is that in comparison to these believers and to the majority of believers in other parts of the world, we have it very, very easy. We do not know what it is really to suffer as they suffer.

And we have to keep whatever trials and opposition we face in this nation or we face in our own family or we face in the workplace, we need to keep them in perspective. Perspective to our brothers and sisters who are going through such terrible things.

But instead of just simply saying to the brothers here, to the Christians here and sisters, dear friends, don't be surprised, that's life, get on with it. Peter says something again which is shocking. Verse 13, but rejoice. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? But rejoice. Where do we hear those similar sort of words about trials and testing? James, of course, isn't it?

[14 : 40] James chapter 1 and verse 2, where he says to the believers there, consider it all joy whenever you face trials of many kinds.

What's he on about? In fact, throughout this passage here that we're looking at together, we see that Peter is seeking for us to see the very positive goodness of God in the midst of suffering. God's good purpose in our suffering. He's spoken there that we're to rejoice. Later on in verse 13, he says that we are to be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Verse 14, you are blessed. Verse 16, we are to praise God. There's no place there is there for complaining, murmuring, feeling sorry for yourself.

Quite the opposite, in fact. But this call to rejoice, this call to praise God, this call to recognize we are being blessed, is not because Peter believes in the power of positive thinking.

[15 : 48] Many people would say, well, when you face trials and difficulties, just think positively. And, you know, get down to it and just press through it. He's not saying that. He's neither, is he saying, all this suffering is just in your mind.

Oh, it's just you being paranoid. It's just you thinking that this is harder than it is. No, he's not. He recognizes these things are fiery ordeals. He recognizes they are painful.

He recognizes they are horrible in one sense. He's not even saying, these things are just for a little while. They'll soon be gone and you'll be in heaven and everything will be all right. But certainly the hope of heaven is here and we'll see that as we go through.

But that's not the main reason that we are to rejoice. As I said, it's true we aren't persecuted very much at all in comparison to these believers.

But we do suffer. We do suffer at the hands of an evil age. We find ourselves suffering, if I can put it this way, when our consciences are disturbed by what we see or what we hear.

[16 : 50] People speaking in the street or by actions that are on television. We do experience unpleasantness, perhaps when we're doing evangelism. Or perhaps when we're simply taking a stand for being a Christian.

People will scoff and mock and perhaps ridicule and perhaps even be more unpleasant than that. We do experience unpleasantness in this world because it's a fallen and broken world.

It's exactly as Jesus promised his disciples in John 16. In this world you'll have trouble. And that word trouble is often translated tribulation, trials. And in 2 Timothy 3.12, Paul says very much the same.

He says, in fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Everyone. If you're a Christian and you want to live for Christ and you want to follow him, it's going to come.

In little or big measure. So there is something that we can draw from God's word here which is applicable to us. There are truths here that help us, empower us to face suffering and to rejoice in the midst of it.

[17 : 59] In the midst of hardship, trial and testing. To praise God. To see ourselves as blessed. Well, how do we do that?

What is it that Peter is reminding the believers here? What truths does he tell them that should cause them to rejoice and us to rejoice and not to be overwhelmed, knocked back, shaken when suffering comes?

Well, the truth is that we suffer because we are one with Christ. We suffer because we are one with Christ.

There in verse 13. But rejoice in as much as you share. Participate in the sufferings of Christ.

There's a sharing. There's a participating in Christ's sufferings.

We are sharing in them. We are part of them. How is that? Because we are one with Christ. The unity we have with the Lord Jesus Christ. We thought a bit about this last week particularly. Means that we share in every aspect of the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus.

[19 : 04] Back in chapter, verse 1 of this chapter we saw. Since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves with the same attitude. We looked back there, didn't we, at Romans 6.

Speaking about this baptism. The spiritual baptism that takes place. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

The fact of being a Christian means that we are united, made one with Christ. So that we literally follow in his footsteps. Literally, he acts on our behalf. But we also live and share in what he went through.

That includes opposition and suffering. If we're united with Christ in his death, dying for our sins. If we're united with him, his resurrection being brought to life now and eternal life.

Then we also must be involved in his suffering. Here's what he said to the disciples in John 15. If they persecuted me. They certainly did, didn't they? They will persecute you also.

[20 : 07] If Christ suffered, we must suffer. But how does that truth enable us to rejoice? The truth that we share in the sufferings of Christ.

How does that cause us to rejoice? Well, because we realize this. That Christ's suffering were the path that led to his glory. Christ's sufferings were the path that led to his glory.

The fact that we suffer with Christ is a guarantee that we also shall reign with him. That's what we have here in verse 13. Rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

You go through the sufferings to get to glory. It's a non-negotiable reality that the Bible teaches again and again, that before there is glory, there must be suffering. Now, we don't like that very much, do we?

We just want the glory bit. We just want the bit that sort of says, you know, being a Christian, you go into heaven. That's great. That's the bit we want to hold on to. But the reality is, again and again, as we see all through the Scripture, as we see in the life of Christ, the life of his apostles, the life of his disciples, it's this.

[21 : 20] When we are one with Christ, the road that leads to glory passes through the valley of the shadow of death. Psalm 23, you know it very well, but when you read it in this light, you see that that is exactly the case here.

Because it's all about David being led, isn't it, by the Lord. He says that he leads me beside pastures and all that, but then, verse 4, Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I'll feel no evil, for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, opposition and persecution. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. So the pathway is, through the valley of death, through a place where we face enemies, and then into the house of the Lord.

We sang there, didn't we, in our opening hymn, that wonderful hymn that begins with the words, we sing the praise, the head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now.

[22 : 25] In the fourth verse it says, speaking of the believer, they suffer with their Lord below, they reign with him above. You can't bypass it, this suffering pathway.

But here's why we rejoice, because if we are suffering, because we are Christ's, then we know we're on the right road. Remember that, I haven't mentioned Pilgrim's Progress for a long, long time, have I?

Pilgrim's Progress. Read it. You'll find that poor old Pilgrim, Christian, is often on a road which is rather uncomfortable, isn't it? He has to go through a vanity fair where his dear friend is murdered, and he only escapes by the skin of his teeth.

We know we're on the right road if we're suffering for Jesus. If we're finding it hard to live in this world, if we're finding it tough to be a Christian, if we're finding the world is opposed to us in the way that we live, and we find ourselves banging heads against it, and it banging its head against us, then we can be assured, dear friends, we're on the right road.

We're following the way of Jesus. We're like him. And that's the reason why we suffer, because yes, we're united with Christ in such a way that we are like him. We are like him.

[23 : 40] We suffer because we're like him. Verse 14. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed. Why are we blessed? For the spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

The same spirit that rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ rests upon the believer. I think that many commentators agree that Peter is hinting at Isaiah here.

So in Isaiah, we're told that Isaiah verse 11, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ to come, a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse.

The spirit of the Lord will rest on him. We suffer because we're like Jesus. Because we belong to him. It's evidence again that we're blessed.

Why do people persecute Christians? It's a question, isn't it? When you see them going on in countries around the world, North Korea and Islamic countries, why do they persecute Christians?

[24 : 41] Christians aren't making bombs. Christians aren't killing people. Christians aren't attacking people. Now of course, sometimes people are unpleasant to us because we're unpleasant. Aren't we? Sometimes people get angry with us, not because we're Christians, but actually because we can be rude at times or thoughtless or insensitive.

That's why Peter says here, verse 16, if you suffer as a Christian, don't be ashamed. Sorry, verse 15, if you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler.

We might think ourselves, well, I don't think I've murdered anybody. I'm not a criminal, I've broken the laws, I'm not a thief. Are you a meddler?

A busybody? It's a challenge, isn't it? Do people perhaps, does that perhaps put people off the gospel? Are we bad witnesses because of the way we act and speak towards people?

Do we stick our nose in where it's not actually wanted? We might think we're doing good, but actually we're just meddling and interfering. We need to avoid that. We need to make sure that at all costs, if we are suffering, it's because we are reflecting the very person of the Lord Jesus.

[25 : 55] If people are unpleasant with us, it needs to be because we are living out a Christ-like life, not because we're being religious fanatics, if I can put it that way, not because we're being insensitive, not because we're being unkind, thoughtless.

If we are persecuted for Christ's name, then we have a blessing because, as we've said, the Spirit of the Lord is on us. It was the Holy Spirit upon the Lord Jesus that made him such anathema to the religious leaders of his day.

It was because Jesus showed the very glory of God in his life that the Pharisees hated him.

Remember what Jesus said in John chapter 3 about himself as the light of the world.

He said, everyone who loves evil hates the light. Jesus came as the light of the world. He came as a light in a dark place. And as he stood and walked amongst the people and as they looked on him, they saw the hideousness of their own sins.

They saw all the greed. They saw all the lust. They saw all the falseness, the hypocrisy. He exposed it. That's exactly why the world hates Christians. We expose the wickedness of men's hearts.

[27 : 06] As light, we show people up for who they are that they are sinners before a holy God. And if those who do evil hate the light of Jesus, they're going to hate the light of Jesus in you and me as well.

So if you're being opposed, if you're being persecuted, if you're suffering, if you're being called names because of Christ, what does Peter say? He says, don't be ashamed.

Verse 16. If you suffer as a Christian, don't be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. Praise God. Praise God that we've received grace.

Praise God that he's rescued and saved us out of the world. Praise God that the name of Jesus is upon us and that we belong to him. Do you remember that wonderful incident in Acts chapter 5 when Peter and John had been brought before the Sanhedrin told not to preach in the name of Jesus and then they'd been given a bit of a beating as well?

How did they leave the Sanhedrin? How did they leave those persecutors who told this? The apostles left the Sanhedrin crying. No, they didn't, did they?

[28 : 18] The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name. We're to praise God.

They praised God. Lord, you've allowed us to share in the name of Jesus. These people have seen Jesus in us. That's what's made them so angry with us. That's what makes them hate us because they see Jesus in us.

Oh, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Do you see why Peter is saying rejoice? Because all these things are pointing to the reality of the fact that we are believers.

Pointing to the fact, the reality that we are following and living for Christ. And the wonderful thing is this, that we suffer now so that we should not suffer in the world to come.

We suffer in this world so that we shall not suffer in the world to come. Verse 17. We're coming to a tricky part of the scriptures here, but we'll understand it, I hope. For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household.

[29 : 22] And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? Again, our suffering, which shows that we belong to Christ, is assurance that we have been

saved from God's coming judgment.

We've been saved from that day of judgment when all the living and the dead will be brought before God and they will have to give an account for how they've lived and they will have to pay for their sins unless one has paid for their sins in their place.

But what does Peter mean when he says it's time for judgment to begin with God's household? Who are God's household? Well, you know who he's talking about because he says it begins with us. It's the church.

It's the company of believers. It's us who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. Judgment? He's not talking about God punishing us for our sin.

He's not saying that at all. He's not talking about that judgment which is the judgment to come. Our judgment has been placed on Jesus. He has done it all. He has died in our place. There's no more punishment for sin.

[30 : 27] This is not eternal judgment but as we see better on earlier on in verse 12 this has come to test you. You can judge something by testing it, can't you? Judge the quality of a piece of cloth.

You're testing to see whether it is good or poor, expensive or test. Test the water to see if it's warm enough with the baby with the elbow in the bath.

That's what God's doing. When he's judging us, Peter's talking about God refining us. Talking about God purging us and cleansing us of those sins that continue to be a hindrance to us in living for God.

He does that with every generation of his people so that the church, so that you and I might be holy people, a godly people, a strong people, a faithful people.

He's already alluded that, hasn't he? Back in chapter 1, verse 7. These have come, that's the severe, the grief of all kinds of trials. These have come so that your proven genuineness of your faith, to prove that our faith is real, of greater worth and gold which perishes even though refined by fire may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus is revealed.

[31 : 43] It's the same as what we read again in James. He gives the same reason for us to count it joy when we suffer trials. For he says there, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. So the trials that come into our lives, including the opposition and persecution that we receive from the world, is part of God's purpose for the church that we might be more like Jesus, that we might be refined, godly.

We've been looking at Jeremiah, haven't we, on a Wednesday and we've seen that what God is doing is that he is purifying his people through the Babylonians. They were a godless people, a people who had idols here and there, who had no regard for the Lord and so what did God do? He sent the Babylonians that they might be purified. Those who came out of the exile 70 years later were a people who had a great heart for God. Without the purifying work of persecution and opposition, the church becomes worldly, impure and spiritually corrupt, which is exactly what is the problem in the church in the West today.

Look around America, look around the UK, where do we have liberty from persecution and it's a great blessing to have, but look at the state of the church. Look how liberalism, false gospels, worldliness, false teaching are rife.

[33 : 21] Persecution is God's way of purifying, of sifting as it were because ultimately unless you're a real genuine Christian when persecution comes, you're going to give up the faith, aren't you?

Unless you really are born again of the Spirit, when persecution comes you're going to say, oh, I'm not a Christian really, you know, I'm not really follower of Jesus. The church is purged. But what Peter is saying is here, yes, God is judging his church, these things are part of his judgment, but they are also a guarantee that there is a greater judgment to come with more awful, more terrible judgments than the suffering of God's people today.

Though we suffer for Christ and though those dear brothers and sisters we've been thinking about in places around the Middle East and in North Korea suffer even to the point of death, that is nothing, if I can put it that way, in comparison with the suffering that must come upon those who have not believed in the gospel, who have not obeyed the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a more awful, terrible suffering coming, an eternal suffering that's coming. For he says, what will the outcome be for those who don't obey the gospel of God? Well, the outcome we know is hell. The outcome we know is judgment. Hebrews in chapter 9 verse 27 tells us this is inevitable.

[34 : 50] People are destined to die once and after that to face judgment. However upsetting it may be for us to see wicked men and women doing evil things and persecuting Christians, however upsetting it may be for you when people are opposed to you and unpleasant to you and we see a world which is turning more and more against biblical Christianity, dear friends, just remember, just remember with pity the fact that these folk, unless God graciously works in their hearts, are heading to hell.

people, have pity upon the persecutors, have pity upon those who speak maliciously to you, pray for them, that's why Jesus says love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, why? Because they're facing a much, much worse thing than anything you and I can face. And we need to love them, pray for them, long for them to be saved.

There's one final thing that we're going to close with here and it's there in verse 19. When we suffer like Christ, we are in God's will.

When we suffer like Christ, we are in God's will. That's a reason for us to rejoice. Those who suffer according to God's will. When we suffer because we're meddlers, gossips or whatever it may be, or criminals, we're not suffering because it's God's will, we're suffering because of our own faults.

[36 : 23] But when we suffer because we are Christians and following Christ, it's God's will. See, Jesus suffered because it was God's will for him to suffer, wasn't it? When he came into the world, when he came to live in this world, he had one mindset, he had one mission, one purpose that he might go to the cross.

That's why he said to his disciples again and again, the Son of Man must be handed over to the Gentiles. He must suffer. He must die. He knew it was God's will. It's no accident that men treated him as they did.

He knew Isaiah 53 verse 10. It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. And at Pentecost, Peter, as he stands before those people and proclaims the gospel, he speaks of Jesus as the one who was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan.

Yes, it was wicked men who did these things and yet overarching this was the wonderful umbrella of God in control. Paul. It's a mystery to us, isn't it? That the wicked actions of men, God overrules. He doesn't make them do wicked things. He doesn't move them to wicked things. They do wicked things because their hearts are wicked and yet that doesn't remove the sovereign care and purpose and plan of God.

[37 : 37] And so it is with us, dear friends. When we suffer, we suffer because God has a purpose in it for our good. painful, unpleasant, but a purpose for our good.

We suffer because we are in God's will. And therefore what should we do? We do the same thing that Jesus did. If Jesus suffered because it was God's will, then we should do the same thing that Jesus did when he suffered and did God's will.

We've got the same refuge. We commit ourselves to our faithful creator and continue to do God. Look at the similarity between that and chapter 2, verse 23.

When they heard their insults at him, that's Jesus, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

That's the same thing, isn't it? We're to entrust ourselves. Just as Jesus entrusted himself, committed himself as he suffered into the hands of his heavenly father, knowing that he had his hand on him and had not deserted him, so we're to do the same.

[38 : 43] We're to commit ourselves to our faithful creator. Trust in the Lord is the only place of safety for us in this world.

It's the only place of refuge for us. In Proverbs chapter 18, the name of the Lord is a fortified tower. We sang that hymn, didn't we? A mighty fortress is our God. Yes, he is.

He's the one who surrounds and protects and keeps us. The name of the Lord is a fortified tower.

The righteous run into it and are safe. Whatever the world does, whatever it says, whatever position it raises up, it cannot touch us.

It cannot remove God's love from us. It cannot stop us being his people. It cannot keep us or take us off the course and the pathway to heaven. It cannot add to us a judgment which God has taken

from us.

And so what do we do? We trust the Lord and pass the ammunition. It says it, it says, isn't it? Continue to do good. There is a temptation, isn't there?

[39 : 48] When the world is difficult and unpleasant, there's a temptation to withdraw. Let's hide away. I don't want people to be nasty to you anymore, so I'm not going to talk to them about the Lord Jesus.

I'm not going to put myself in that place. No, doing good means just carrying on living for Jesus. Just carrying on. Jesus, when he was opposed, when he was persecuted, what did he do? Did he go back to Galilee? I've tried, but they all rejected me, Father. I've tried, but they don't want to hear your good news. No, he didn't. What did he do? He carried on.

In fact, we're told, there's that wonderful phrase, I think it's the AV puts it, he set his face as flint for Jerusalem. He set his face as flint for Jerusalem. He just did good.

They wanted him to stop doing good. They wanted the apostles to stop good. Stop preaching in the name of Jesus. Can't obey you, we've got to obey God. Suffering mustn't divert us, dear friends, from following in the footsteps of Jesus.

[40 : 46] Instead, suffering should urge us on to be more like him, to display his love, his light, his grace, in a world which is so desperately in need of it.

grace. The reason that it acts that way is because it does not know the grace of God. But you and I are here that it should know the grace of God. When we suffer, we are not out of God's hand, we are in his hands, that he might work in us what is good and pleasing in his sight.

May the Lord bless us in that. Amen. Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will.

And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory forever and ever.

Amen.