

**Living Hope:
Embrace Your Suffering
1 Peter 3:13-4:2; 4:12-19; 5:9-10**

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Text Introduction: We are returning to 1 Peter. “Living Hope” is a phrase that we find in 1 Peter 1:3. Jesus is our Living Hope. This is the Gospel. Our salvation rests in the resurrection of Jesus. Our hope in this life rests in the resurrection of Jesus. Today, we are going to consider several passages of Scripture that all deal with the subject of suffering.

The purpose of 1 Peter is to encourage the recipients to endure in their commitment to Christ. The description of being aliens in the land in which they live coupled with the general call to endurance throughout the letter suggests the idea that they were suffering from some level of persecution. However, I think that we can take these general principles of enduring in the midst of suffering brought on by persecution to all forms of our suffering.

Text: ¹³Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. **Do not fear what they fear or be intimidated,** (1 Peter 3:13-14)

Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin— ²in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God’s will. (1 Peter 4:1-2)

¹²Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. ¹³Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler. ¹⁶But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name. ¹⁷For the time has come for judgment to begin with God’s household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God?

¹⁸**And if a righteous person is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?**

¹⁹So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good. (1 Peter 4:12-19)

⁹Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.

¹⁰The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. (1 Peter 5:9-10)

Introduction: I learned a long time ago that I never lack for an audience when I preach on the subject of suffering. And yet, a question that every Christian must wrestle with is how to reconcile a loving God

to the presence of suffering. Ravi Zacharias has said that it is the greatest obstacle to belief in God. (In book *Why Suffering*)

We need to begin with some very preliminary thoughts. Not all of these are specific to this passage, but are found throughout the Word of God. Let's summarize:

- Sometimes, our problems are to discipline us. God disciplines us for our disobedience. That was true in the Old Testament times of Israel. That was true in the New Testament as Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, the he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7)
- Sometimes, we will not know the reason for our suffering. Remember Job. He was not privy to all that was going on behind the scenes that resulted in his suffering. Even Paul, later in the book 2 Corinthians spoke of a thorn in the flesh that had no apparent reason. (2 Corinthians 12:7) Even beyond these Scriptures, the Bible is filled with evidence that we are not always going to have all of our answers.
- Sometimes, our suffering is the results of the fallen world.
- Sometimes, our suffering is the result of our Christ likeness. The emphasis of the text before us today is this idea.

In fact, the text before us indicates that if we suffer, it is better to suffer for our good. So, what are we to do? This text doesn't so much address the philosophical question of the why of suffering, but assumes that we do. In that context, the call is to "Embrace our Suffering."

Embrace Suffering! Why can we embrace our suffering?

1. Suffering connects us to Jesus. (3:18)
2. Suffering changes us. (4:1-2, 12)
3. Suffering creates in us a yearning for Heaven. (4:13)
4. Suffering causes us to see the blessing of the grace and glory of God resting on us. (4:14)
5. Suffering creates the opportunity to glorify God in our suffering. (4:16)
6. Suffering causes us to trust God. (4:19)
7. Suffering causes us to be more sensitive to the suffering of others. (5:9)
8. Suffering causes us to see that God is strengthening us. (5:10)

So What?

1. **Don't Fear Suffering**

2. Don't Be Surprised by Suffering

3. Rejoice in Suffering

Andrew Murray lived between 1828 and 1917. He is still considered one of the leading writers on prayer. Here is Andrew Murray's formula for trials.

1. Say, He brought me here. It is by His will I am in this strait place and in that fact I will rest.
2. He will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child.
3. Then He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends for me to learn.
4. In His good time He can bring me out again—how and when He knows.

So let me say, I am

1. here by God's appointment;
2. in His keeping;
3. under His training;
4. for His time.