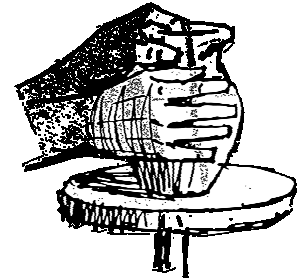


His Workmanship: Westside

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

We Can Rejoice in Suffering: 1 Peter 4:12-19, by John Piper

"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; 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." 1 Pet 4:12-13.

Suffering and Hedonist Christians.

It might seem strange that 1 Peter could be anyone's favorite Biblical books—since it's mostly about suffering and how to live in a hostile culture. Most of us are card-carrying, full-blooded, unwavering hedonist Christians. But it isn't strange for people who have lived long enough to realize what Paul Brand, the missionary surgeon to India, wrote in his book: Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants: *"I have come to see that pain and pleasure come to us not as opposites but as Siamese twins, strangely joined and intertwined. Nearly all my memories of acute happiness, in fact, involve some element of pain or struggle," Christianity Today, Jan. 10, 1994, p. 21.* No one says, *"The deepest and rarest and most satisfying joys of my life have come in times of extended ease and earthly comfort."* It isn't true. What's true is what Samuel Rutherford said when he was put in the cellars of affliction: *"The*

Great King keeps his wine there"—not in the courtyard where the sun shines.

What's true is what Charles Spurgeon said: *"They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls."*

Hedonist Christians will do anything to have the King's wine and the rare pearls—even go to the cellars of suffering and dive in the sea of affliction. So you can see that it is not strange that we love the epistle of 1 Peter—a handbook for persecution and martyrdom of Christians.

A Joy-Seeking Missionary Family.

A young family in a Muslim nation had been there three years working with a group of 100,000 people with no knowledge of Christ. The couple had three children under five years old.

The baby was covered with pox marks, some of which looked infected. A visitor from the US asked if the child had chicken pox. *"No, those are ant bites,"* the mother said. *"We can't keep the ants off him. Eventually he will become immune to them."* The visitor Bernie May wrote: *"In a moment of honesty she confessed she felt guilty because she was suffering from stress. Stress! She and her young husband came there from mid-USA. Now they live in a place where*

the temperature is above 100 degrees most of the year. The children are covered with bites; a war is going on close by; their helpers are in danger for being their friends; many in the villages are suffering from hunger and disease; they can't even let their supporters know what they are doing so that they can pray for them since they are in a 'critical' area—and she feels guilty because she is under stress. I told her she had every right to feel stressed. I had only been there three days, and I was already beginning to come unglued. Yet this dedicated young couple are laughing and joking and filled with the joy of the Lord," letter from Bernie May, Jan. 1990.

1 Peter is a letter mainly about how to be like that. Peter, in fact, commanded us to be like that and gave at least six reasons why we should be and can be.

Six Reasons to Keep Rejoicing.

The command is found in v. 13: *"To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing."* Keep on rejoicing. When you are thrown in the cellars of suffering, keep on rejoicing. When you dive in the sea of affliction, keep on rejoicing. In fact, keep on rejoicing not in spite of the affliction but even because of it. This is not a little piece of advice about the power of positive thinking. This is an utterly

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“Count It All Joy” When You Suffer, *from p. 1*

radical, abnormal, supernatural way to respond to suffering. It is not in our power. It is not for the sake of our honor. It is the way spiritual aliens and exiles live on the earth for the glory of the great King. “*Count it all joy when you meet various trials,*” Jas 1:2, is foolish advice, except for one thing—God. Peter gives six reasons why we can “keep rejoicing” when the suffering comes. They all relate to God.

1. Not a Surprise but a Plan. Keep on rejoicing because the suffering is not a surprise but a plan. “*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,*” v. 12. It isn't strange. It isn't absurd. It isn't meaningless. It is purposeful. It is for your testing. “*Let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator,*” v. 19. “*According to God's will.*” Suffering is not outside the will of God. It is in God's will. This is true even when Satan may be the immediate cause. God is sovereign over all things, including our suffering, and including Satan.

But why? For what purpose? Compare vs. 12 and 17. Your fiery ordeal comes “*for your testing.*” God's judgment is moving through the earth. “*For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*” v. 17. The point is judgment. The church does not escape. When the fire of judgment burns the church, it is a testing, proving, purifying fire. When it burns the world, it either awakens or destroys.

“*And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?*” v. 18. Believers

pass through the testing fire of God's judgment—not because He hates us, but because He loves us and wills our purity. God hates sin so much and loves His children so much that He will spare us no pain to rid us of what He hates. So reason number one is that suffering is not surprising; it is planned. It is a testing. It is purifying fire. It proves and strengthens real faith, and it consumes “performance faith.”

Alexander Solzhenitsyn had long been impressed with the patience and longsuffering of Russian believers. One night in prison in Siberia Boris Kornfeld, a Jewish doctor, sat up with Solzhenitsyn and told him the story of his conversion to Christ. That same night Kornfeld was clubbed to death. Solzhenitsyn said that Kornfeld's last words “*lay upon me as an inheritance... It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good... Bless you, prison, for having been my life.*” We have strong hope that the sufferings of our own day will bring purity and life to many. Suffering is not surprising; it is purposeful.

2. Evidence of Union with Christ. Keep on rejoicing because your suffering as a Christian is an evidence of your union with Christ. “*But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing,*” v. 13. In other words, your sufferings are not merely your own. They are also Christ's. This is cause for rejoicing because it means you are united to Christ. Joseph Tson, a Romanian pastor who stood up to Ceausescu's persecution of Christians, wrote, “*This union with Christ is the most beautiful subject in the Christian [sic] life. It means that I am not a lone fighter here: I am an extension of Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body. It is not my suffering: I only had the*

honor to share His sufferings,” “*A Theology of Martyrdom,*” undated paper. Keep on rejoicing, because your sufferings as a Christian are not merely yours but Christ's and they give evidence of your union with Him.

3. A Means to Attaining Greater Joy in Glory. Keep on rejoicing because this joy will strengthen your assurance that when Christ comes in glory, you will rejoice forever with Him. “[*As you share the sufferings of Christ*] keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation,” v. 13. Notice: keep on rejoicing now, so that you may rejoice then. Our joy now through suffering is the means of attaining our joy then, a thousand-fold in glory.

First there is suffering, then there is glory. “*The Spirit predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow,*” 1 Pet 1:11, cf. 5:1. Paul said, “*If we suffer with him we will be glorified with him,*” Rm 8:17; cf. Phil 3:10. First the suffering, and then the glory—both for Jesus and for those who are united to Him. If we become embittered at life and the pain it deals us, we are not preparing to rejoice at the revelation of Christ's glory. Keep on rejoicing now in suffering in order that you might rejoice with exultation at the revelation of His glory.

4. The Spirit of Glory and of God Resting on You. Keep on rejoicing in suffering because then the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you. “*If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you,*” v. 14. This means that in the hour of greatest trial there is a great consolation. In great suffering on earth there is great support from heaven. We may think now that we will not be able to bear it. But if we are Christ's, we will be able to bear it, because He will come to us and rest

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God makes my heart clean in 2015 "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." —Ps 51:10

Joy in Suffering, from p. 2

upon us. As Rutherford said, "The Great King keeps his finest wine in the cellar of affliction. He does not bring it out to serve with chips and on sunny afternoons. He keeps it for extremities." If you say, "What is this?"—the Spirit of glory and of God resting on me in suffering—the answer is simply this: you will find out when you need it. The Spirit will reveal enough of glory and enough of God to satisfy your soul, and carry you through. Seek to be holy; seek to bring truth; seek to bear witness; and do not turn aside from risk. Sooner or later you will experience the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon you in suffering.

5. Glorifying God. Keep on rejoicing in suffering because this glorifies God. "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God," v. 16. Glorifying God means showing by your actions and attitudes that God is glorious to you—that he is valuable, precious, desirable, satisfying. The greatest way to show that someone satisfies your heart is to keep on rejoicing in him when all other supports for your satisfaction are falling away. When you keep rejoicing in God in the midst of suffering, it shows that God, and not other things, is the great source of your joy.

Paul Brand, the missionary surgeon to India, told the story of his mother who preceded him as a missionary in India and who did something that

Discipleship Here At Home

symbolizes a life devoted through suffering to the glory of God and not self. Dr. Brand wrote, "For Mother, pain was a frequent companion, as was sacrifice. I say it kindly and in love, but in old age, Mother had little of physical beauty left in her. The rugged conditions, combined with the crippling falls and her battles with typhoid, dysentery, and malaria, had made her a thin, hunched-over old woman. Years of exposure to wind and sun had toughened her facial skin into leather and furrowed it with wrinkles as deep and extensive as any I have seen on a human face... Mother knew that as well as anyone—for the last 20 years of her life she refused to keep a mirror in her house," *Christianity Today*, Jan. 10, 1994, p. 23. Twenty years of ministry without a mirror. Get it? The Word was her mirror. God was the light and the glory of her life.

6. God's Faithfulness to Care for Your Soul. Finally, keep on rejoicing because your Creator is faithful to care for your soul. "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right," v. 19. The degrees of suffering and the forms of affliction will differ for every one of us. But one thing we will all have in common till Jesus comes: we will all die. We will come to that awesome moment of reckoning. If you have time, you will see your whole life played before you as you ponder if it has been well-spent. You will tremble at the unspeakable reality that in just moments you will face God. Then the destiny of your soul will be irrevocable. Will you rejoice in that hour? You will if you entrust your soul to a faithful Creator. He created your soul for His glory. He is faithful to that glory and to all who love it and live for it. Now is the time to show where your treasure is—in heaven or on earth. Now is the time to shine with the glory of God. Trust Him. And keep on rejoicing.

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

- **Judy Strand**—recovering from heart valve surgery at home
- **Kaylee Chavez**—age 10, PRAISE—spinal fluid no cancer cells; MRI clear; treatment continues
- **Rod Green**—recovering from severed thumb
- **Ed Fink**—prostate cancer; treatment for brain tumors
- **Pat Wilkes**—surgery recovery for torn shoulder tendon
- **Bill Dennis**—home following rehab on infected knee drainage; pseudo-gout
- **Pat and Larry Campbell**—flu-like symptoms
- **Sandra Perry**—possible kidney failure, may need dialysis or transplant; heart valve issues recently diagnosed; neuropathy from diabetes
- **Chris Bennett**, former member—all tools for biz stolen; recovering from fall, fractured pelvis
- **Buford Wrather, Cheryl Reames's dad**—stroke, complicated by Parkinson's; in CO Springs
- **Sylvia Chapman, Brett's grandmother**—third stage pancreatic cancer; chemo
- **Judy Sartin**—cold; rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis; arthritis
- **Brittany Tope's mother**—breast cancer in spine; pain in broken ribs which tumor has injured; grandmother—on dialysis
- **Kim Howell's niece Tonya Robison**—delivered 32-week, 2 lb, 5 oz **Malachi Taylor Robison** several wks ago; in NICU in Louisville, KY
- **Kenny Boyd's coworker Kim Phillips**—asks our prayers for heart problems
- **Rick Robbins**, friend of Howells—brain surgery

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

- Logan Corray; Addison Tope; Christian Harrod; Rocco Jr; Tim Huelsman**—asthma
 - Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy; celiac disease
 - Jonathan Hadders**—RA
 - Danielle Huelsman**—vertigo, CV syndrome
 - Hannah Huelsman**—polycythemia, thickening of blood; heart murmur, acid reflux, chest pain
 - Kirk Johnson**—MS
 - Menards**—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes, weak, 92nd birthday 4/9; **Virginia**, macular degeneration; high bp
 - Cheryl Reames**—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia
 - Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung weakness
- Travel** **Sarah McMurray** in Chicago all week for work. **Brett Witherington** in FL Through April helping his father remodel houses; **Kaysha** there through Wed.
- Rejoice** **Cliff Cox** has a new job with Littleton Police, and his family has a new home.
- Directory**—**Walkers** have new phones: **Joel**, 303-589-8411 **Meredith**, 720-501-7856
- Bereaved** **Nell Free's** memorial service will be tomorrow, 10 am, Olinger Crown Hill Mortuary, 29th & Wadsworth, Wheat Ridge, reception to follow at **Giles's** home. Nell passed away 4/11.



Exposing current thoughts & trends *religious liberty*

Furlough on Faith, by Tony Perkins

The U.S. military swears an oath to support the Constitution—but Obama's military leaders blame it for "modern sexism"! Last week The Daily Caller found that the Obama military was actively teaching young troops that not just the Constitution but the Bible and the Declaration of Independence were to blame for society's gender inequality. The training came courtesy of the Pentagon's Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), whose materials claim that these "historical influences...allow sexism to continue." As the Caller points out, the "Prejudice & Discrimination" course was mandatory for some service members—including some of the Navy's medical personnel. "Quotes [sic] from the Bible can be misinterpreted as having a sexist influence when brought out of context and not fully understood," the text suggests. "In 1776, 'We the people...' only included white men: slaves and women were not included until later in history."

Beginning Wed, 5/27, through 7/31, Payton Miller will work with Westside teaching/preaching for us during the PM services on Sunday and teaching a youth class on Wednesday nights. Jim will mentor Miller through the summer.

Once reporters started asking questions, the courses suddenly vanished from the DEOMI website. Pentagon Spokesman Lt. Commander Nate Christensen, who has been the PR janitor at the Pentagon, continually mopping up behind the administration, insists that the curriculum is under review now that it has been exposed. But how do they undo the damage that has been done? More than 2,000 troops have been indoctrinated with this rubbish since 2011. The military learned its lesson in 2013 with calling religious organizations "hate groups," and removed that content from training materials, but it has a long way to go to loosen the grip of political correctness on our troops. The military needs not only to stop this attack on our Constitution and our godly heritage, it needs to repair the damage it has already done. Under Obama, the United States military is almost unrecognizable—which is all the more reason for believers to pay close attention to presidential races. If the last seven years have taught us anything, it's that our nation needs a courageous leader who won't just babysit America's demise but will snatch this country back from the edge, Jas 5:19-20. In the meantime, let Defense Secretary Ash Carter know what you think of his "training."



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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Westside-Church-of-Christ/276475819148309>

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class, "Marriage Boot Camp: Basic Training in Communication, "What's It All About?"** Jim Reingrover

- **Sermon, "Peter's Epistle to Westside, 12,"** Jim Reingrover

Sunday afternoon

- **Lessons from the Life of Christ, "Woes to the Pharisees—Matthew 23:1-36,"** Joel Walker

Feeding on His Word Reading

Everyone is invited to an open Bible reading of Genesis 25-50 this evening, April 19, at 4 pm, ending with light supper, at the Reingrover's house. See **Joel Walker** for schedule.