

Walking the Walk of Faith Through Fear

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[0 : 00] Before we read the scripture, I would like us to pray and ask God for miracles because we need it today. We need the speaking in tongues gift today.

You need the gift of interpretation because my accent, I'm sure, is not something that people are used to. So you definitely need the gift of interpretation.

So I pray that the Lord will help us all in Jesus' name. So if you don't mind, will you stand up as we read the word of the Lord? We are going to be reading from ESV translation, and I will read the book of 1 Peter chapter 4.

I will start reading from verse 12 all the way through 19. Amen. If your Bible doesn't have the book of 1 Peter, just throw it away.

I'm sure we have the trash can outside. All right. Are we there? All right.

[1 : 13] Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes up in you to test you. Verse 13.

But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. Verse 14.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rest 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.

Verse 17. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God, and it begins with us. What will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

[2 : 26] Verse 18. And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

Verse 19. Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will will entrust their soul to a faithful creator while doing good.

May the Lord bless the reading of his word in Jesus' name. Our heavenly Father, we thank you for this wonderful time. We give you glory and magnify your holy name.

We worship you for this sacred moment that you've given to us to come and sit majestically before you and to hear from you. I pray this hour, Lord, as I lead this section, I pray that your spirit will interpret what I'm going to say.

I pray for the gift of language and the gift of understanding as I share your word with your people. Father, I pray, Lord, that your spirit will help us to be attentive to what you have for us this morning.

[3 : 33] For we pray in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen and amen. Let's be seated.

Thank you. So the book of 1 Peter was written in around 60 AD by Apostle Peter, one of the senior disciples of Jesus Christ.

The central message of this book is to bring the reality of suffering to the church in that time, who are going through persecution, but not as intense as those people from the earlier years.

And when we think most of the time, when our brothers and sisters in the developed world think of persecution, the first thing that comes to mind is Middle East.

Or northern Nigeria. When we think of trial, we tend to think of other places. But the question is, are Christians in the 21st century living in Boston today going through her time?

[4 : 58] Are you going through opposition? Is there opposition? Well, they will not be looking for you to jail you, to kill you. But in reality, are you going counterculture in your society?

Are we, as Christians, going through also personal trials, personal struggles? Is it true that you could be misunderstood by the very people you care about?

In fact, the members of this church. Is it possible? Do you? And sometime, I know the reality, we have this psychological, all human have those psychological, I call it step checkers, you know, like checkpoint, and one of those are known, as you probably know, as denial.

When we deny, denial is helpful, but when we continue to live in denial, we will not be able to face the real problem. What does it mean in Cambridge today to be a Bible-believing Christian and want to stand by what you believe?

What does that mean? And I think that's the question that you need to ask, as we think. Even in the church today, when you are going in trials, when you are suffering for either sickness, marital issue, relationship issue, economic issue, it is teaching today that America, unfortunately, is also part of that teaching that in the church, that something is wrong with you.

[6 : 55] Maybe you are sinning. Maybe you are doing something wrong. You have a secret sin. But the question today, as we continue to look into the topic of faithfulness and trial, or being faithful in trial, is it possible for us to face different trials, including opposition from our society?

Now let's look into the first verses we read, the first one, verse 12. In verse 12, literally, it says, and I read, verse 12, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes up in you, to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

Looking at this passage, it's really easy to see that trial, suffering are not supposed to be a strange topic to the church of Christ.

Jesus, in his own infinite wisdom, when he comes to the earth, as the book of John says in chapter one, he becomes one of us.

He lived and suffered and eventually died for our sin. Somehow, he does not protect us from the reality of where we live.

[8 : 33] He died. And the invitation of being Christian, most of the time when we talk about Christianity, the first thing that comes to mind is what I call fire insurance services.

What I mean by fire insurance is like, now I'm saved, I'm not going to help praise the Lord, and that's it. That is true. We are saved from internal condemnation when we are in Christ.

But the reality is way more than that. In the book of John 17, if you have time, read it. If you don't, read it before. When Jesus was praying for his disciples, and the next generation of the disciples, and the next after, his prayer was that we will be one with him as he is one with the Father.

Which means we are invited into the Trinitarian table of fellowship. What that is saying, what is true for Jesus, is also true for us.

The key point here is like, a believer is as sure be prepared to face trial irrespective of where you are.

[10 : 01] When you are going to be a Bible-believing person, here in this building, here in this church, here in this place, you will face opposition from the same people who love God and care also about you.

The journey of becoming a Christian is not just come to the church on Sunday, but the journey is to become like Christ every day and to share even in his suffering.

Let me just pause here. Am I saying if you are a Christian, you must suffer? No, really. What I'm trying to say is possible to be a Christian and also suffer.

It's possible to be a Christian and face trial. It's possible to be a Christian and face temptation. For example, how do we deal with the LGBTQ community?

How do you love the people, at the same time condemn the sin? How does that sound in this community? And I know it's a sensitive topic.

[11 : 30] But how do you live in that kind of thing? Showing love, but living biblically. How do you actually show faith, your faith, even when you've been persecuted?

One of the examples for that is, I love sharing this story because it happened recently. One of the leaders in the north where we do ministry specifically to Muslims, we came together, there were about 400 people who come for the meeting.

And he is one of the top leaders. He's supposed to do the call to worship. That guy was one of the most functual Africans I know. Well, underline African.

Means showing up on time. You know, that day he was not on time. He came about 15 minutes late.

So when he came into the meeting, where we come from, putting on people wear longer clothes and hard and all those things. He just showed up with a tear shirt and only singlet on his upper part of the body.

[12 : 46] And he rushed to the pulpit. And I was sitting thinking what everybody was like. What's going on? And that guy was looking bruised.

Signs of blood and stuff like that in his body. He did the call to worship in singlet as if nothing was going on. After he finished what he needed to do, he came down.

Then I met him. And I was like, dude, what's going on? What happened? He said, oh no, it's not a big thing. I just get beaten up. By who? And he goes like, oh, I preached to the king.

And he asked them to beat me up. And I look at him and I was like, and you choose to preach to him today? You choose to share Christ today? He said, no. It was yesterday I shared the gospel.

It is today that I received the beating. And the amazing thing, you think, that very person will go, oh no, I'm not going again.

[13 : 51] I'm not doing. All the friends will be discouraged. The people around him, the very believers around him, who are living in the community, made it to be like a joke.

They were laughing. I'm bro. So when they beat you up, were you crying like a baby or like a girl? Asking their leader, how was he crying when he was beating up?

I was sitting processing there. These guys understood what it means to be joyful even during suffering.

And that's what Peter, the author of this book, is saying. Suffering while going through trial.

Suffering while going through opposition. Suffering in Christ, the believers at that time should consider it joy. A lot of us attach our joy today in the church by the kind of movie we watch.

[15 : 02] There are some of us who even think it's the responsibility of our spouses to give us joyful. It's working with God by the power of his spirit.

Living according to his will, that's what gives us joy. Amen. So all I'm saying, don't be caught off guard when you are suffering.

When you are going through spiritual battles. When you are going through physical illness. Whatever you are going through, do not be off guard.

I'm praying that we will not suffer, but we cannot run away from going through hard times in our lives. One of the things I personally try to live by is to prepare for the worst.

And to pray and hope for the best in my life. And I think that's what Peter is encouraging them. He says, hey, we know you don't want the suffering. We know you don't enjoy the opposition.

[16 : 11] But please, be prepared for it. Amen. In verse 13, let's read it again. Verse 13. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

Again, the point number two is rejoicing in suffering. Suffering connects us to Christ's reality when he was on earth.

We just finished celebrating Easter. Remember, it is in suffering that we enjoy victory. Without Jesus coming to the earth, book of Polyphians chapter 2.

Verse 1 down. He said that Jesus did not consider his equality with God something to be grasped.

But he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death. This is what Jesus went through.

[17 : 27] And that's why we had the privilege of celebrating Easter. I don't know how you celebrate Easter over here exactly. But back home, we celebrate Easter by eating a lot of chickens.

And a lot of time, we enjoy the celebration of Easter. But the question is, do we really sit down and process and meditate of what it means for Christ to literally carry his cross, being humiliated as God, being weaved by the very people he made and created, and put on a cross like a criminal?

For believers, when somebody is making fun of you, thinking you are uncivilized, thinking you don't know what you are doing, is equivalent to some of us who are basically living in a society of life and death before Jesus Christ.

Because you know what it means to make fun of. And I know what it means to be chased, to be locked, and to be beaten. I know what it means.

But I don't think God is saying, oh, yours, because they almost kill you, yours is better. I don't think that's what Jesus is saying. And I don't think that's what Peter is saying. Whatever that temptation is, or that trial is, that persecution is, starting from people laughing at you to probably saying words at you, consider it joy before the Lord.

[19 : 10] It's only when you are ready. That's the reason why soldiers go for training. That's why they don't pick people like myself who eat too much to just go out and fight, right?

What do they do? That's why they prepare you in military training. They train you. In some countries, like other countries, what they are saying, they will cut off your civilian tail.

They want you to be strong. They want you to be prepared. The reason is for preparation so that you can just, they don't want you to die.

That's why you prepare. And what we are saying, what Peter is saying to us today, he's saying, brothers and sisters, understand that suffering, understand trials, understand being persecuted for the sake of Christ, being out of passion, out of fashion as a Christian, be prepared.

It's part of being, part, and partakers of what Christ went through. Because Jesus clearly told his disciples, you are in this world, but you are not belong to it.

[20 : 32] Which means, you can be in this world, go to do your daily activities, but your thinking pattern is not as the same as those who are in the world.

And Paul said it somewhere. He said, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Saying yes, yes to everything that your culture throw at you is not necessarily being transformed.

But saying yes to the Lord, even when the culture is saying no, that is what it means to be part of what Christ went through.

So again, what we say in chapter, verse 12, expect trial, in verse 13 through 14, we see Peter is encouraging people to rejoice in suffering.

[21 : 42] Now, let's go to verse 15 through 16. 15 and 16. All right.

But let no one of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an able-doer, as a meddler, yet, if anyone suffer as Christian, let him not be Hashem, but let him glorify God in that name.

So they're calling for the believers. Still, it's not like because you are a Christian, then you can go and commit crime and do stupid action. I remember a few years, about eight years ago, I was here coming from New York to Boston.

I was driving at the 65 zone, and the police officer caught me doing, I think, 84. Well, driving.

And then he did the lighting. That was the first ticket ever in my life. And then, he parked, he said that the moment he put the light, and go, whee, whee, and pull over, that was the first time I got pulled over, and he said, do you know why I stopped you, sir?

[23 : 01] I was like, I actually, the moment he did that, I look at the speedometer, he says, 84. He said, you are doing 84 in 65. You know, I would have thought as a Christian, this guy was persecuting me, because I'm a child of God.

You know, that wasn't persecution, I was actually doing 84, and the guy said, I was doing 84. Jesus has nothing to do with that one, I guess.

I think Jesus left me when I was doing 65 at that day. So, the point is like, that is different, between, suffering for our stupidity, and suffering for Christ, is different thing.

Oh, by the way, did I tell you, he charged me \$200? I will never forget that one. That is the definition of stupidity. That's no suffering for Jesus Christ.

That was an example of me, breaking the law, and the law kind of break my pocket at that point. By the way, as a student, when you lose \$200, you will never forget, guys.

[24 : 17] So, the point is, so now, then he talked about, in verse 16, he said, do not be ashamed. You know my temptation?

A life, right now, even back home. is, being a Christian, for me, doesn't feel cool. In fact, for the most time, consciously or unconsciously, when somebody in the place of authority stopped me, either on the road, or somebody asked me the name in an office, I caught myself, not introducing myself as Emmanuel, many times.

I want to say, my name is Mohammed. Somehow, I feel connected to the authority I used to have, when I was in Islam.

Therefore, it feels cool to be Mohammed. It's not, please, don't misunderstand. It's not every Mohammed is powerful. just the fact that I bear the name, Dad Mohammed, the name is powerful, and I feel like it's a lot easier to identify with that.

What Peter is encouraging us, starting from me, he's saying, no, your identity is Emmanuel. Do not be ashamed of that person.

[25 : 48] I can tell you what it means to live in a society where Christianity is not, is out of fashion. One day, we were, we were being interrogated in one way, long story short, and I was like, hey, these are the government apparatus who are grilling me, asking questions, and stuff like that.

And I say, hey, guys, you're focusing on me, that I'm not harming anybody. How about the Boko Haram guys? Why can't you focus your energy on those criminals, and stuff like that?

One of them, who is a Muslim, said to me, Boko Haram are better than you. You know, when he said that, it hates me.

This is not the statement of true or not. As far as that immediate community is concerned, I don't know if you heard anything about Boko Haram, it's hardly not to hear anything about them.

If you don't, I wonder. He said, those guys, the people I consider monsters, are better than me from his perspective. How evil can you be?

[26 : 57] This is the kind of things that it's easy for us to be ashamed of Christ. It's very easy for us to be tempted, to be ashamed of who we are, even in a town like Cambridge here, or wherever you come from.

It's really easy because it's not the popular culture anymore. It's really easy. What Peter is saying, be encouraged and do not be ashamed of the name of Christ because he himself has gone through suffering.

It's really important if we are going to suffer, we are going to go through those hard times.

It's really important for us to suffer or to be persecuted or to go through trial for a right reason. not for the wrong reason, like me driving 84 miles per hour.

I want to read verse 17 through 18. 17 through 18.

[28 : 17] For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. If it begins with us, what will be the outcome of those who do not obey the gospel?

And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?

The issue is here, what he is saying, as we go through those things, remember we are still accountable to Jesus Christ.

We are still accountable to the body of Christ. We can't live a lie. The difference between being an unbeliever, in my opinion, and being a believer is having the master whom you serve.

in this case, Jesus Christ. The reason why we are called born again, or we are called believers, is for the reason, the fact that we have submitted and surrendered unto the Lord.

[29 : 37] That idea of surrender and becoming one with him, that's what makes us who we are. We need to be better than the people who don't know the Lord.

The Lord. Jesus Christ, true Peter in this case, is calling us, hey, as we go, part of going through suffering, is inner battle that goes within us.

Most likely, if you are a Christian here, you might, because there are not many Christians, you might struggle to find friends. Some of us, we might struggle to find a life partner, because the majority of the culture is no longer Christian.

It is my prayer that our good Lord will give us the grace to continue to live a life of trusting ourselves with him.

today, today we look at three things as I close. All this long, broken English that I'm trying to speak to you this evening, this is what I'm trying to say.

[30 : 45] Number one point is, expect trial as a believer. The second point, rejoice even through struggle and temptation, even through suffering.

The third point that I was trying to communicate is so far for the right reason, not breaking the speed limit. And also, as you work, the next struggle you have, the final one is the struggling of surrendering and obeying.

This is the constant battle. The majority of the Christian battles are not about fighting, in my case, from Africa, the demons.

I don't know what you fight over here. Even recently, I learned that they are inviting angels from Africa to come here. And I was like, do you really want those? But that's not the point. The point is this.

That acknowledgement of inner battle, fighting temptations, fighting to be like him, fighting the popular culture.

[31 : 58] This is one of the things that the Lord Jesus Christ is calling all of us to do. As we close, I want to encourage all of us to continue working with him, to expect suffering, what we hope that we will not suffer.

And I'm saying this with a bitter taste in my mouth. Do you really think I want to suffer? I really don't. I want to enjoy life.

I want to, like, I want to ride the most expensive, anything that you can imagine. Yeah, right? I want to have the best of the house. I want to be the cool guy, even though I'm not cool.

But I'm trying to be cool guy. The only person who thinks I'm cool, I think, is my daughter. Well, even her sometimes. And don't worry, she's just three, so let's wait when she's 18, then we'll talk about that.

But the point is this, right? Try. Let's continue to work hard. Let's continue to face the culture while we depend and rely on Christ Jesus.

[33 : 07] Let's continue to struggle and become like him in every day. one day we might win, maybe the next day we might lose. The third day we get off again, I repeat.

It is my prayer that our good Lord will bless us all in Jesus' name. Why can't we pray? You may sit down, you may stand up, it's up to you, but let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Father of all, we thank you for this reminder that suffering for Christ is not a cause but a blessing from you.

Teach us to rejoice even in the fairy trials, knowing that you are purifying us and preparing us for a greater glory.

Strengthen us, O Lord, O Holy Spirit. Help us to stand firm to glorify you even when it costs us some things.

We entrust our souls to you completely, O Holy Spirit. To you, our faithful creator, may our lives shine as a testimony of your goodness.

[34 : 25] Even though the trials in Jesus' mighty name that we will win, even through the difficulties that we will win, even through the secularism that is going around, Father, help us to be a witness to you.

Let your spirit continue to guide us. May the trials of life that we are going through draw us nearer to you, O Lord. Father, we pray that we will be in tune with you, in tune with your spirit, O Lord.

Help us to be the ambassadors you call us to be. For we pray all this in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God bless.