

Preparation for Persecution

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[0:00] You can open your Bibles this morning to 1 Peter chapter 4 and find verse 13.

! And we are going to, this morning, finally get back to 1 Peter. And one of these days before Jesus returns, we'll finish it. Of course, I can't say that, can I?

I can't really. Now, we'll get to the text here in just a moment, but let me ask you a question. Let me begin this morning with a question. I'm sorry. Kind of threw some of you.

We'll get to the text. Let me ask you a question. And think real hard about this. What do you envision for the Christian community in America?

And I use that term in the broadest possible sense. What do you envision for the Christian community in America over the next, say, 5, 10, let's go out even a little further, 20 years?

[1:13] What do you see happening with the Christian community in America? Greater secularization?

Now, think about that for a moment. Would that be what you are seeing coming? I think we're seeing it today. Will that continue on? A greater secularization of the Christian community in America and, therefore, relative peace in our culture?

That is, peace with the non-Christian community? Or greater separation morally, socially?

And, therefore, an intensification of persecution in our country. Maybe to a level that we have never known. What do you envision for the Christian community in America over the next decade or so?

Now, honestly, little doubt exists in my mind, anyway, that we have been seeing Christians or the Christian community at large in America becoming more and more secular.

[2:35] I mean, honestly, if you just look at that and consider that, I think you'll agree we're becoming more and more, I mean the Christian community at large, more and more secular, materialistically, socially, morally even, and I would say even politically.

It's kind of a timely thought in our day. The Republican debate last night won tonight, and, of course, the primary is going on, and this year a presidential election.

Christians, listen, Christians or the Christian community has become a political force to be reckoned with in America.

And that's just so common for us that we don't think that's unusual, but historically that's very unusual. In fact, maybe unique in a culture, in a society, in a civilization, that the Christian community would not only be a force to reckon with, but a voting bloc to be desired by politicians.

We used to be called the Christian right, and I think still are to some degree. Although, probably that term is used more as a pejorative, a criticism, kind of a scandal.

[4:00] But I think probably the popular designation today seems to be social conservatives. I mean, just ask Rick Santorum if social conservatives made any difference for him in the Iowa caucus.

And, of course, social conservatives is kind of a broad term, isn't it? And I think by design, because that then would be a broader tent to include even non-Christians who might consider themselves as social conservatives.

Or certainly every brand, every flavor of Christianity. Probably wondering where am I going with this. Now, for my part, I do not have a problem with Christians engaging in the political process. In fact, I highly recommend it. We're citizens of this great nation. And also, though not all would agree with me on this, I do not have a problem with Christians organizing themselves for political and social causes.

So long as they do not violate God's Word and so long as it's not the function of the church.

Because it's not the function of the church. In fact, I was asked the other day if I was going, when was I going to endorse a candidate for president this year?

[5:18] I said, I never will. Never will. But we ought to be involved. Listen, Christians have as much right to speak as anyone else.

And not only to speak, but also to be heard in the political forum. We have that right. And our voices should not be thrown out or even discounted just because we're Bible-believing Christians.

Isn't that right? I shouldn't have asked that. Now, that said, in our day, political conservatism, if we could use that designation, political conservatism and biblical Christianity, in many people's minds have become almost synonymous.

We're talking about the same thing there. And so there has been a secularization of Christianity in the political arena.

And somehow we've come to the place, I think, by and large, where we have the mistaken notion that if we can just get the right people elected, that our country will then become more moral.

[6:43] That morality would be the result. No more abortion on demand and legalized. No more homosexual marriage.

No more gays in the military. The pornography industry will dry up and blow away. And on and on and on. But listen, God did not call us to moralize our country.

I know moralize is not a word. God didn't call us to do that. You say he didn't? Well, God called us to evangelize our country.

And indeed, not just our country, but our world. And I guarantee you that Christians who live out the word of God without compromise and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ without apology will be persecuted.

Will be. And that is Peter's subject in our text for this morning. So now we're ready to read it.

[7:50] 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 12. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you.

But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you. For the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part, He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified. Now, that sentence doesn't appear in many translations.

So some of you have an NIV, or excuse me, NIV and New American Standard. And some, you might think, well, what was that? Well, that's just in the King James, New King James. Anyway, but let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, or an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

Yet, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God.

[9:15] And if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. All right, there's the passage.

Now, here's the problem we face when approaching this particular text of Scripture. Well, approaching the subject of this text. And the subject is persecution.

Not just suffering in a general sense, but the focus is Christian persecution. That is being persecuted and suffering for your faith. Now, here's the problem we face when we deal with this subject.

Peter is speaking about something most of us know nothing about firsthand. I mean, really, we don't.

[10:16] Now, you know, to be honest, some of us may have suffered a little ridicule because of our Christianity. Some of us may have suffered some rejection from some people.

Some of us might have had to put up with some minor slander because of our biblical convictions. A few may have missed out on a job opportunity primarily because of biblical convictions.

And maybe, remotely, some may have even lost a job because they have refused to violate God's Word. That kind of persecution, of course.

We know something about that. But listen, dear people, and I think you would agree, none of us have had our property confiscated. None of us have been imprisoned or tortured or had loved ones executed because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

That's not happened to us. Unless, of course, we have someone here visiting from another country. And sometimes that happens because of the voice of the martyrs. And I don't think any of us here

have endured any of that.

[11 : 31] And yet I would tell you that Christians living in, well, specifically 23 of the 198 countries in this world are experiencing these kinds of persecutions on a regular basis.

It's a part of everyday life for many people, for these people who live specifically in these 23 countries. That would include China and many of the Middle East countries and so forth. In fact, 31% of the world's population live in countries where Christianity is not only illegal, but it's restricted. Or because it's illegal, it is restricted. 31%. You know, that's roughly 2.2 billion people live in places like that.

And then there are many countless other Christians living in other nations that may not necessarily be or qualify as restricted countries, but they are enduring levels of persecution that we don't know anything about.

Yet. Yet. Yet. Yet. Because one day it will happen to us. Maybe not in your lifetime, my lifetime.

[12 : 47] Maybe it will. In our lifetimes. Someday it will happen. And someday we may see this kind of persecution. We may be living on the eve of a level of persecution that would be totally foreign to us today.

Other than we've heard about it in other places. But here. It would be totally new. A level of persecution we have never known.

Never experienced. We may be living on the eve of that. We may be living on the eve of that. I'm not trying to make a prediction. But. But. But. But. I think it's a. A safe. Pretty sure assumption that. One day it's coming. One day it's coming. And we may be very close to it. Closer than we've ever been before. Certainly. And closer than we think. And.

Here's my point. Peter's words are meant to prepare us for that. That's how we connect what he is saying here with us today. Because otherwise it would be difficult for us to make a connection.

[13 : 53] And yet Peter's words do prepare us for something that we may very well experience. In this life. In our life. Lifetime.

Peter's words are meant to prepare us for that. Just as they were meant to prepare Peter's original readers. By the way. You see. Historically. Peter's original readers were living on the eve of Nero's persecution.

And hadn't yet taken place. But very shortly. That was going to begin. They were living on the eve then. Of a level of Christian persecution they had not known before. Even as severe as their persecution was at the present.

They were about to enter into a whole new level of intensification of persecution. And Peter somehow knew that.

Certainly the Holy Spirit did. It was Nero's persecution. You know something about Nero don't you? Nero was one of the Roman Empire's most notorious of Caesars.

[14 : 59] And Nero. You know from history. Burned down most of the city of Rome. And to divert the blame from himself.

He was able to transfer the blame to the Christian community. Because the people of Rome. The Roman citizens were willing for that.

They didn't like them anyway. And so this led to an unprecedented persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. In fact for example Nero had Christians strapped to poles.

And covered in pitch. And then set on fire. For this purpose. To provide light for his outdoor parties. That's the kind of God Nero was.

And we all know that Nero had thousands of Christians fed to lions in the arena just for sport. That is just for public entertainment. And it was for them.

[16 : 00] In a twisted sort of way. In a way that we cannot even begin to comprehend. It was entertainment for them. We're talking about severe persecution. Now based upon what we know about the date of 1 Peter.

Peter wrote this letter just before Nero's campaign of persecution began. And listen Nero was just the first of 10 successive persecuting Caesars in Rome.

And he was just at the beginning of an onslaught of persecution that lasted for almost 300 years. And so this was timely for them.

Peter's letter. And I think it is timely for present day readers as well. Now how does Peter then prepare us for coming persecution?

Well let me give you four points of instruction this morning. Not me but let Peter do so. Let God do so through Peter. First of all.

[17:10] Peter says here in verse 12 that we should receive persecution expectantly. That's number one. Receive it when it comes.

And it will. Because we ought to receive it expectantly. Look at verse 12 again. It's very clear. Peter. Beloved.

Peter begins because he speaks to them as a loving pastor. He says beloved do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing were happening to you. He's saying receive it expectantly. Now in this particular version I just read. New King James Version.

The word strange appears twice in the text. If you don't notice it from your copy of God's Word you heard me say that. The word strange appears twice. And rightfully so because it's the same word.

[18:09] Twice. Though in different forms. First time it's a verb. The second time it's an adjective. And the King James translates it strange. Other versions of the Bible translate the first occurrence with the word surprised.

Do you see that? And so he said in those versions. Beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you. And by the way that is the idea here.

Don't be surprised by it. And then when we get to the second time the word occurs. This time an adjective. It is the word strange. So that's the idea. Strange or foreign or unusual.

That's the best way to understand what Peter is saying when we put it all together. He is saying when persecution comes do not be surprised by it. And why?

Because for a Christian persecution is something that you ought to expect. That is it's not something strange.

[19:11] It's not something foreign. In fact look again at what Peter says here. He says do not think it's strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you. Now watch this. As though some strange thing happened to you.

Now pay attention to that word happened. As though some strange thing happened to you. Now let me use another word that I could insert there for the word happened and it would be perfectly right. It would be the word accidental. As though it was some accident. Don't be surprised. Don't be surprised. As though something accidental has happened to you.

As one of God's children. Because see listen. Peter knows and we ought to know that nothing ever just happens in the life of a Christian. Nothing does.

And we think so. And from our perspective it looks that way. But things don't just happen to us.

Nothing is accidental for one of God's children. Even persecution.

[20:17] Persecution is a part of God's plan for his children. I know we don't like that. But that's the case. And that is it's inevitable.

And so therefore we ought to expect it. Now isn't that what the Bible tells us in many other places.

In fact we could go to Jesus himself. Jesus said in John chapter 15 verse 18.

He's speaking to his disciples. But through them he's speaking to us. He said if the world hates you. You know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world.

The world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world. But I chose you out of the world. Therefore the world hates you. Remember he said to his disciples.

Saying to you. Remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me. They will also persecute you. That could not be clearer.

[21:16] Could it? And we certainly know from history. What happened to all of Jesus' apostles.

They were all persecuted. All of them martyred. Except one. John. 1 John 3.13 Do not be surprised brethren.

If the world hates you. Don't be surprised by that. 2 Timothy 3.12 Paul said to Timothy.

Yes and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus. Will suffer persecution. Right there in plain English.

In God's word. All right. So first of all. Receive persecution. Expectantly. Expectantly. Second.

And believe me. This. Will be much harder. Second. Rejoice. In persecution. Wholeheartedly.

[22:19] Verse 13. But. Rejoice. I tell you. That just makes no sense to us. That is.

If we're. Honest. About it. You know. What Peter said. In verse 12. We just looked at. A moment ago. That poses. No real. Problem. For us.

That is. That we should. Expect. Persecution. I think most of us. Understand that. That doesn't. Pose. Any problem. And. I would say. That we might.

Have. Expected. Peter. To follow this up. With. An admonition. Something like. Endure the persecution. We might expect him. To say that next. Expect it.

And so here's what you need to do. Endure it. That is. Hold on through it. Stand strong. Stay faithful. Don't give up. Don't give in. We might expect.

[23:13] Expect that. And I would say to you. That even that. Would. Have been. Easier. Than what Peter demands. Of us here. In verse 13.

And it is a demand. By the way. This is a command. Word. Rejoice. Is a verb. And it's an imperative.

Verb. That means. This is a command. This is hard to do. But. It's commanded of us. To rejoice. Wholeheartedly.

And then. Let's add to this. What Peter says. In verse 14. If. He says. Or really. It's. To be understood. Since. There's a grammatical.

Technical issue there. But it. Won't go into that. But it means. Since. Since what? Since you. Are reproached. For the name of Christ. Some of you might have the.

[24:14] The word reviled. Reviled. Reproached. Or reviled. And by the way. The word is a very extreme word. Extremely strong word. And the word. Means. Literally.

To cast. In one's teeth. Kind of. Kind of. Sounds vicious. The idea being that. Whatever you offer. You offer to someone. Or. Give to someone.

Or say to someone. That. Instead of receiving it. They. Throw it in your face. They cast it. In your teeth.

That's what the word. Reproach. Means. Or revile. Means. And so. Peter. Is saying. Since. You are. Reproached. For the name of Christ. What? Blessed.

Are you? If you didn't already know that passage. And. You were listening to someone read it. Would you be expecting that?

[25:12] I. I wouldn't. You're looking at me very pious. I guess you're more spiritual than I. You said.

Blessed. Are you? Or if you have a King James Version. It's happy. Happy. Are you? That is. Happy. If you're reproached. If your very life.

And the things you exude. And say. And. And offer to people. If those things are. Thrown back in your face. Happy. Are you?

That just doesn't make any sense. See. Listen. That's not the way we generally look at Christian persecution. Is it? We don't look at it that way in the first person. Certainly.

That is. What. What's done to me. What's done to me. And I'll look at persecution done to me. In that way. That I'm happy. About it. I don't even think.

[26:08] We don't normally. Look at it in this way. In the second person. Is we. When persecution is thrown at us. As the Christian community.

Maybe at our church. And Peter says. Happy. Are you? And I'll add. This. We don't even look at it this way.

In the third person. When it happens to someone else. And we read about. You know. Some pastor. In. In. China. Or. Some place like that.

And we read reports about that. And our first. First. Kind of. Response is. How sad. How tragic. Oh. How terrible. And obviously. In a sense. It is. But. But we don't think. Of it in a positive way. As we think.

[27:03] Of the big picture. We just don't. Look at it that way. Now. Listen. Actually. The Greek word. That. Was used here. By Peter. Is a word.

That means. Prosperous. I don't know. How we get happy. Out of that. Or. Blast. Blast. Seems to make sense. And that's. Probably a better. Translation.

But the word. Actually means. Prosperous. Prosperous. I think. Think about that. We. Sang that. Getty. Song. A while ago. And I. Took note.

Of the phrase. Treasure. Of a trial. Treasure. Of it. That's. What Peter. Is talking. The idea.

Being. That. If the world. Persecutes. A Christian. It. Is. An indication. Of the spiritual. Prosperity. Of his. Or her. Life. I.

[28:01] Tell you. This is a whole. New. Way. Of. Of. Of. Of. Looking. At persecution. Whether. You're. The one. Receiving. It. Or. It's. Someone. Else. To think.

That it is. An indication. Of the spiritual. Prosperity. Of. A life. There's. Actually. A treasure. This. Persecution. Or. To put it. Another way.

It. Is. Proof. That God's. Hand. Is. Upon. Your. Life. That. Helps. Us. Kind of. Get a hold. Of. Even. More. And.

You. And. I. Can. Rejoice. Or. To use. The other word. Prosper. In. Persecution. And. We. Can. Do. So. Because. Of. Several. Things.

That. Peter. Mentions. Here. Number. One. Because. God's. Intent. Is. To.

[28:53] Refine. You. You say. Does. Peter. Say. That. Here. He. Does. It. Easy. To. Miss. But. It. Comes. To. Us. In. In. In. The. Meaning. Of. The. Word. Fiery. Trial. You. See. That. There. The. Fiery.

Trial. Or. Fiery. Ordeal. There. In. Verse. Twelve. Now. That. Word. Comes. From. A. Certain. Greek. Word. That. Generally. Refers.

To. A. Smelting. Furnace. Where. Where. You. Put. Gold. Or. Silver. In. Its. Raw. Form. And. Refine.

It. Burn. It. Burn. Out. All. Of. The. Dross. The. Impurities. Until. What. You. Have. Left. Is. Pure. Pure. That's. The. Word. Peter. Chose. In.

[29:51] Our. Suffering. For. Christ. Is. To. Purify. Our. Lives. It's. The. Refiner's. Fire. Second.

God's. Intent. Is. Not. Only. To. Refine. You. But. Also. God's. Intent. Is. To. Reveal. You. And. This. Too. Is. A. Treasure. To. Reveal. You. In.

Verse. Twelve. You. Have. The. Words. To. Try. You. That. That. How. It. Is. In. The. New. King. James. To. Try. You. Or. Test. In.

Other. Word. But. The. Word. To. Try. You. Translated. To. Try. You. Means. Literally. To. Put. You. On. Trial. That. That. What. Peter. Is. Talking. About. To. Put. You. On. Trial. The. Persecution. Is. Used. God's. Intent. Through. It. Is. To. Put. You. On. Trial. And. Everyone. Knows. That. The. Purpose. Of. A. Trial. Is. To. Bring. For. Evidence. To. Highlight. Evidence.

[30:48] That. Will. Either. Prove. You. Innocent. Or. Prove. You. Guilty. And. So. Then. Persecution. Is. One. Of. God's. Tools. Intended. To. Reveal.

A. Person's. True. Spiritual. Identity. This. Is. A. Treasure. There. Is. A. Third. Intent. God's. Intent. Is. Also. To. Reward. You. To. Reward. You. And. Really. Here. Here's. The. Real. Prosperity. Persecution.

Verse. Thirteen. Look at it. Look at it. Closely. But. Rejoice. Now. Watch. This. To. The. Extent. Or. Degree. That. You. Partake. Of. Christ's. Suffering. What does that mean? Well. Just. It's simple. Not. Everyone. Suffers. Equally.

[31:44] We. Know. That. Don't. We. Not. Every. Christian. Suffers. Persecution. Equally. And. There. Are. Few. That. Have. Suffered.

To. The. Extent. That. Christ. Suffered. I. Can. Think. Of. One. Particularly. How. About. Peter. Himself. The. One. Who. Wrote. This. According. To. Church. Tradition.

I. Think. It's. Probably. Accurate. That. Peter. Was. Crucified. Just. Like. Jesus. And. Yet. He. Was. Crucified. Upside. Down. By. His. Request. And.

So. He. Suffered. Certainly. To. In. A. Physical. Sense. To. The. Extent. That. Christ. Suffered. And. So. He. Saying. Here. But. Rejoice. To. The. Extent. To. The. Degree. That.

You. Partake. In. Christ. Sufferings. That. When. His. Glory. Is. Revealed. And. That's. Reference. To. His. Second. Coming. When. He. Comes. Again.

[32:37] That. You. May. Also. Be. Glad. With. Exceeding. Joy. Or. Rapturous. Joy. And.

That. Is. The. The. Idea. Is. That. The. Greater. Your. Suffering. Or. The. More. Like. Jesus. You. Are. Persecuted. The. Richer. Your. Joy.

When. Jesus. Comes. And. So. The. Reward. Is. Delayed. The. Great. Reward. Of. Our. Persecution. Is. Something. That. Comes. When.

Jesus. Comes. At. The. End. Of. This. Life. And. So. The. Degree. To. Which. You. Suffer. To. That. Degree. Your. Joy. Will. Be. Richer.

This. Is. A. Reward. And. So. God's. Intent. In. Persecution. Is. To. Refine. You. And. God's.

[33:32] Intent. Is. To. Refresh. You. Through. Your. Persecution. Verse. Fourteen. If. You. Are. Reproached. For. The. Name. Of. Christ. Blessed.

Are. You. Prosper. Are. You. And. Why? For. The. Spirit. Of. Glory. And. Of. God. Rests. Upon. You. When.

He. Said. The. Spirit. Of. Glory. And. Of. God. Rests. Upon. You. He. and indwell your life.

No, it doesn't mean that. And why? Because that's already the case. See, the Holy Spirit comes and indwells the Christian's life at the moment of conversion.

From that point on, He takes up residence in your life and He never leaves. Never leaves. And at that very moment, the moment you repented and trusted Christ as your Savior and you were born again, at that very moment, the Holy Spirit of God came to reside in your life and you have all the Holy Spirit there is to have.

[35 : 11] He lives in you. And so it doesn't mean that. So then what does it mean? Well, the word rest comes from a word that means to give refreshment.

Refreshment. To refresh. We have an old expression, and I haven't heard it for a number of years, but used to. Early on, I pastored in some rural areas, and so I would hear this quite often.

And the expression goes like this, Can I spell you? Yeah, see, you've heard that before, haven't you? At least maybe some of you from a certain age going up.

Can I spell you? And what do they mean? Let me give you some rest. You've been working hard.

Let me take over for a while. That's the idea here. Here's what God is saying.

Here's what God does for persecuted saints. He takes up the battle in their behalf. He takes up the battle in their behalf.

[36 : 22] When you read stories of some of the Christian martyrs over time, some in the past who now have been martyred and are dead, and some who live in the present, and their lives are a life of martyrdom in a sense.

When you read those stories, have you ever thought to yourself, how do they do it? How are they able to do that?

And you read some of the reports published by VOM, for example, and you read about certain pastors in these restricted countries, and you read how they are constantly threatened and beaten and imprisoned over and over and over again, and they just simply continue to preach and evangelize with seemingly no thought of ever giving in or ever giving up.

How do they do it? The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon them. That's what Peter's talking about here.

He refreshes them. He, in a sense, spells them. He takes up the battle for them. And He will do that for you too. What a preparation for persecution.

[37 : 47] He will do that for you. The Spirit of glory and of God, the Holy Spirit, will rest upon you, refresh you. He will, that is, with one qualification.

And that leads to the third thing we need to see here, third point of instruction. How can we prepare ourselves for persecution, receive persecution expectantly, rejoice in persecution wholeheartedly, and third, reflect upon persecution honestly.

Reflect upon your point of persecution and reflect upon it honestly. Out of a self-examination. Verse 15, but, and here's the important qualification, but let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busy body in other people's matters.

We'll get to that one in just a moment. That is, the Holy Spirit of God will not rest upon your life if your suffering is the result of your own sin.

Sometimes we suffer, and we do so because we've sinned. We might call it Christian persecution, but it's not.

[39 : 15] Not if you murder someone, regardless of how justified the cause may seem. I was thinking about a guy by the name of Michael Griffin way back in 1993 who murdered an abortion doctor and was convicted of murder and serving a life sentence.

That's not Christian persecution. I'm sorry. Some would disagree. I don't thank anyone here necessarily. Yeah, just a couple of years ago, a few years ago, in 2009, Wichita, Kansas.

Remember? Dr. George Tiller, abortion doctor, shot and killed by Scott Roeder. Roeder's serving a life prison, life in prison.

This is not Christian persecution, and I've just chosen to give one example. Peter says the Spirit of God is not going to rest upon your life. It's not going to refresh you if you're suffering because of your own sin, not as a murderer and not as a thief.

That is not if you steal. Let me make an application here, an illustration here. If you rob from your employer, be it money or any other tangible asset, or be it time, if you rob from your employer and you lose your job or worse, you go to jail, you're not suffering as a Christian.

[40 : 54] This is not persecution. And the Spirit of God will not be resting upon your life. In fact, if you are a child of God, His discipline will be resting upon your life. And then Peter includes kind of a catch-all as an evildoer, he says.

I don't know if it's just because he didn't want to list anything else. He just wanted to say anything else that's sin. Or any other crime without any exception.

But then he adds this fourth thing, something that just does not seem to fit. Or as a, he says, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Isn't that interesting? That seems strange in light of the other three, doesn't it?

Doesn't it to you? The word busybody comes from a Greek word. Of course, all this comes from the Greek. But this is interesting.

It comes from a word that doesn't appear anywhere else in the Bible. It's the only place you find this word. In fact, scholars tell us that this word not only does it not appear in any place in the Bible, but it doesn't appear anywhere else in Greek literature.

[42 : 12] Peter coined a word here. And it's a mile-long word. I'm not even going to try to pronounce it for you. Mile-long in the Greek language.

And it is so because it's two words put together. Kind of two words pasted together. And Peter, you know, just took liberty here and he did that. Two words.

The first word means belonging to another. That is, that which belongs to another. And the second word means overseer. And so, you put it together and the idea is this.

A self-appointed overseer in another person's business. You know any Christians like that? Who? No, I'm just kidding. Anybody we know? Okay. Now I'm making light of it, but it is serious.

[43 : 11] Sometimes Christians, we Christians, can poke our noses into another person's life, the life of an unbeliever, and that's the idea here. Because of our zeal, we can seek to impose our biblical standards upon them.

Now obviously in our culture, and more and more in our culture, the unbelieving world would charge meddling, charge us with meddling just for sharing the gospel.

That's not the idea here. This is trying to impose your biblical convictions, lifestyle convictions on another person and you get into their private life.

And so you must live this way just like I do. And it's kind of a condemning, judgmental, we might use the word holier than thou kind of approach.

And we might have the right position, biblical, but the wrong disposition. And if we do that, we'll suffer for it and it's not Christian persecution, or Peter is saying.

[44 : 33] Yet, Peter says as we go on, Yet, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

That is, give God glory for your persecution. It kind of takes me back to remember something that happened to the apostles early on in Acts chapter 5 and they were brought before the council, the Jewish council, and they were scrutinized and they were told don't preach in his name and they flogged them, they whipped them.

That's pretty severe. And then released them and the Bible says in Acts 5.41, rejoicing, they went out rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for his name.

That's what Peter's talking about here. Giving God glory for it. Let's move on quickly. Verse 17, For the time has come for judgment to begin at the household or house or household of God.

Now, remember, the purpose of Christian persecution is to refine you, reveal you. And so we could say that what Peter's saying here, and this is what he's saying, that suffering is designed by God to cleanse the church.

[45 : 57] So it starts with the household of God. Suffering and not just simply persecution, but all suffering, it begins with the house of God. He is intent on cleansing the church.

But read on, because also suffering is designed to warn the world. Isn't that interesting? The unbelieving world should pick up a copy of the newsletter from BOM, for example, and they should be warned.

You say, what? Well, look at what he says. He says, and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? What's going to be the end of them?

And to explain what he's talking about, he quotes Proverbs 11, 31. Now, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, and saved not in the sense of salvation, but in the sense of sanctification, that is, if it's difficult for the believer to make it through this life, then where will the ungodly and sinner appear in this process?

That is, if it is necessary for God to purify the lives of his saints by drastic means, persecution, suffering, then what does that say about the hope of the unsaved?

[47 : 18] Or to put it yet another way, let me quote Kenneth Wiest, he put it this way, if the righteous need disciplinary judgments, how much more will the unrighteous merit the wrath of God whose offer of righteousness they have rejected?

That's the idea here. Now, let's move on. One last thing. How do we prepare for persecution in the future and respond to it in the present?

Receive persecution expectantly, rejoice in persecution wholeheartedly, reflect upon persecution honestly, and finally, respond to persecution faithfully.

Respond to it faithfully. Verse 19, therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to him in doing good as to a faithful creator.

Commit your souls. Or some of you might have the word entrust. The word means to put in a trust.

[48 : 26] It's a banking term. And it means to deposit one's valuables in a bank for safekeeping. That's the secular meaning of the word.

Of course, Peter's not applying it to the secular. He's applying it to the spiritual. And so, what could he be meaning here? Well, let me ask you, what could be more valuable than your soul?

Much more valuable than your car or your house or your other possessions? Your soul. What could be more valuable than it? And so then, to whom should you entrust it?

Obviously, God. in the most intense of Christian persecution, form of intense persecution, can your persecutors destroy your soul?

No. And if you are a believer, your soul, is guarded by God Himself, continue to entrust Him with that no matter what may happen.

[49 : 54] And then He says, our faithful Creator. Now, if God was able to speak all things into existence and He is able to continue to sustain all of that creation, then can't we trust Him?

Of course. No matter what happens, no matter what, we can trust Him. Paul wrote to Timothy, he said, I know whom I have believed and am persuaded, absolutely convinced, that God is able to keep, secure, guard, what I've entrusted to Him until that day.

That is when this life is over. I'm persuaded. And perhaps Job, Job knew a thing or two about suffering.

Perhaps Job in Job 13 and 15 put it in the most absolute of terms. And I'll close with this. Job said, though God slay me, though God kill me, you might be able to finish that, yet will I trust in Him.

There could not be a better preparation for any level of persecution that you or I might experience now or in the coming days.

[51 : 44] There could not be a better preparation than what Peter said to us right here.