

# Our Response to Suffering

by Anton Bosch

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*This sermon delves into the importance of enduring trials and persecution as a test of faith, emphasizing the need to commit one's soul to God amidst challenges. It highlights the sifting of true believers from false ones, the significance of witnessing the sufferings of Christ, and the call to respond to persecution with a Christ-like attitude of forgiveness and commitment to God's judgment.*

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 4:12, Matthew 26:52, Romans 12:17, 1 Peter 5:1, Philippians 2:5

**Topics:** "Endurance in Trials", "Christ-like Forgiveness"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Amen. Praise God. Well, it's good to be together again this evening.

Welcome to each and every one. Welcome to those online spending the time with us. We're in Peter, and we're going to conclude with chapter 4 this evening.

So, 1 Peter chapter 4, and we'll read 12 through chapter 5 verse 1, and you'll see later on why I'm going into chapter 5. So, 1 Peter chapter 4, reading 12 through 5 verse 1. 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. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, or an evildoer, or 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. 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. The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.

So I want to just backtrack a little bit to verse 17 and then move forward from there. So the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. We spoke about different aspects of that judgment, but particularly what he is speaking about is the trials and the persecution that has come upon the church at that time, and that will come in the century since then till today.

And this, he says, is a judgment of God, and it's a judgment in the sense of a sifting or a sorting out of those who are His and those who are not His. And we have emphasized this, and I need to emphasize it again, that we are in exactly that kind of time right now. There is a sifting going on amongst those who are so-called Christians in America and in other parts of the world, and there are all sorts of things that God is allowing and using for the sifting to happen.

And so in that process we are absolutely amazed and, over these last few days, I have been absolutely amazed again by those who you think are believers, whose hope and confidence is in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Word of God, in fact having their confidence in something else other than the Word of God, having idols that they worship that supersedes God and His Word. And so this is something which has become very real, particularly in America today. And as we get closer to November, we are going to see, I believe, a greater and a greater sifting as Christians are polarized around spiritual issues or political issues.

And in that process the hearts of men is being revealed. We are able to begin to understand where people are at. And unfortunately we find ourselves in a place where the road is broad and there are many that lead to destruction.

There are few who find the road to eternal life. And so judgment begins at the house of God, and God has begun to judge His church. I believe this with all of my heart, and I believe that this judgment will continue as we go through the next few months and probably well into the future.

But then He says, if it begins with us first, and obviously the judgment sorts out the wheat from the chaff. And we have to connect back to John the Baptist. You remember that his winnowing fan is in his hand and he is going to thoroughly cleanse his purgery threshing floor.

And so he is sifting between the wheat and the chaff, between the wheat and the tares. And if in that process many who seem to be part of the household of faith, the house of God, if many are revealed to not be true believers, or others who may have been true believers, fall away. And I do believe that there is that possibility of falling away.

If that is what is happening in the church, what Peter is saying, what is going to happen with the world? And obviously he is not even answering the question. It is what we call a rhetorical question. The question has its own answer.

In other words, if it is hard, and we come to verse 18 in a moment, but in verse 18, if the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the unbelievers end? And so we find ourselves in a terrible time. And there is that scripture which I think is partly applicable to our time, and that is that there are millions in the valley of decision. People are making decisions.

And it is important that we make the right decisions, that we make the right decisions concerning where our faith and our confidence is. If our faith and our confidence is in a political party, or our faith and confidence is in the Constitution, or our faith and confidence is in the pastor, or our faith and confidence is in a church or a denomination, as we said last week or this week, if your faith and confidence is in this building and in God's presence inside of this building, all of those things are going to be tested, and all of those things are going to be blown away, and only the reality will remain. And so if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Then verse 18, now, and I said last week, this is a quote from the book of Proverbs, from the Septuagint translation, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? If the righteous, who are the righteous? Clearly the righteous must be those who are born again.

Those who are tares, and I think we all understand what we mean by the tares, you remember that the sower goes and he sows the wheat, and the enemy comes and he sows the tares in between the wheat, they look like the real thing, but they are not. And he says, let them grow, and at the judgment they will be, they will be sorted out. Now, the righteous then are not the tares.

They are not those who are not, who are not saved. If you are righteous, the only basis on which we can be righteous is on the basis that we are born again, on the basis that we've been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. That is the only basis on which we can be righteous.

And so he is saying, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, what does that mean? In other words, if Christians are going to get into heaven, well not all, but some, by the skin of their teeth. And is that, is that possible? Yes it is. I believe that there will be many who will be saved on that day, but they are literally saved by the skin of their teeth.

They are saved, but that's it. There is no reward, there is no nothing. They simply make it, they scrape into heaven, the way I scraped through grade 12 when I went to school, in the 1% above the fail rate.

And so, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, if it is so difficult for those who are believers to make it, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? And obviously the answer is, they will appear before the Great White Throne judgment. And obviously if you appear before the Great White Throne judgment, it is over. It is done.

There is no chance of salvation. It is simply a judgment for the penalty phase of the judgment if you will. It's simply the formality that determines that you are damned forever.

And so, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? And so our response to trials, our response to persecution, is absolutely crucial, because that's what he's talking about. And he's saying that when the persecution comes, we need to see it through. We need to win in that process.

And how do we come out of that victoriously? Well I think that's an important question. And I think the only way that we can come out victoriously is if we remain close to the Lord Jesus Christ. If we remain steeped in His Word.

If we don't allow ourselves to be brainwashed by whatever is going on, on fake news, and on the news, and in the world, and in the religious world today. And it is absolutely horrifying what goes on. I was doing some research on something, and I'm not going to get into the details, but there's a key word that I was

looking for, and I came across a video by another South African preacher who preaches in Florida, and his whole message was about the Second Amendment.

And in fact, he hands out AR-15s to members of his congregation, so that we can defend our liberties, so that we can defend our rights. This is what is being preached in pulpits today, folk. God help us.

And so we find ourselves in a very dangerous and a very difficult place. The attacks that we are facing today may not be the kind of persecution that Peter is talking about. That is coming.

But the persecution will come from your friends. The persecution will come from other Christians. And the persecution will come from two sides.

And this is where I get political again. It will come from the liberal left, who deny the scriptures, who deny the Lord Jesus Christ. But it will also come from the conservative right, who have formed their own idea of American Christianity, which is not based on the scriptures.

The persecution has already begun, and it will get worse and worse for those who cling to Jesus and to His word. And folk, we must cling to His word. We cannot allow our understanding of the scripture, our theology, our faith to be shaped by political forces in the world today.

We cannot allow our faith to be shaped by the conspiracy theories that are floating around all over the most ridiculous stuff. And yet Christians, some Christians that I dearly love, that I have walked with for thirty years, are buying into this nonsense, and forsaking the word of God, and listening to stuff that is not biblical, that is not from the word of God. And that's where the persecution, that's where the testing is going to come from.

Are we willing to stand and say, I identify with Jesus. I identify with the word of God. I don't identify with any human or earthly ideology.

If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the sinner appear? Now he says, therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God, commit their souls to Him in doing good as to a faithful creator. What is our response? How do we respond when the persecution comes? And I know that there are those here this evening, and there are those who are listening or watching the video who have lost friends in this week. How do we respond when we suffer according to the will of God? And I'm going to expand on that.

We've dealt with that. We don't suffer as thieves, or as evildoers, or as murderers, or as busybodies in other people's matters. But if we are suffering because we're taking our stand on the word of God, and when the word of God stands against the ideologies and the ideas of men, rejection is inevitable.

It is inevitable. It was true of Jesus, and Jesus says, if they loved me they'll love you, and if they persecuted me they will persecute you. How do we respond? Let those who suffer commit their souls to Him.

Remember right at the beginning, Peter quoted the Lord Jesus, and he says that though he was reviled, he reviled not again. In other words, when they said terrible stuff to him, he didn't say those things back to them. But he committed himself to Him who judges righteously.

And here he's coming back to exactly the same idea. Commit your soul to Him. He knows.

He sees. And He will call to an account. Vengeance is mine.

I will repay, says the Lord. He knows. He sees.

And He will call to an account. And when Christians feel the need to defend themselves and to fight for whatever it is that they believe they need to fight for, there is a question as to their Christianity. The man who's writing this, remember, is Peter.

He was the man who took a sword to the garden of Gethsemane, and he pulled out the sword, and he cut the ear of the high priest's servant. And what did Jesus say? He who lives by the sword will die by the sword. Jesus never defended himself, and it amazed Pilate that he would defend himself.

Don't you say anything? Don't you make a defense? But the prophet said that he would be led as a lamb to the slaughter. He would not open his mouth. Jesus doesn't defend himself, because Peter said he had committed himself to Him who judges righteously.

It wasn't for Jesus to take vengeance on the Romans, or on the Jews who betrayed Him, or on Judas, or on the disciples who had forsaken Him. God is the judge. And, folk, there needs to be a stillness in our hearts.

There needs to be a surrender to God and saying, Lord, it's not my fight. It's Your fight. It's not for me to exact righteousness or judgment or vengeance or to get equal.

That's Your problem. But, Lord, I want to be in the right place with You. I'm committing myself to You.

I want to be right with You. And being able to forgive, being able not to carry grudges, being able not to look for vengeance, being able not to be angry. Lord, my eyes are on You.

And, folk, unless we get our eyes on the Lord Jesus, we will be drawn into retaliation. And you see, that's exactly the problem. That reveals the hearts.

Remember, we spoke about this some time ago, a few months ago, when Jesus stands before Pilate. And Pilate says, well, why don't you say something? Are you not a king? Jesus says, I am a king. But my kingdom is not of here.

Because if it was, my servants would fight. You see, what defines earthly kingdoms is that they are set up and they are defended and they are protected through fighting, through wars. And whether those wars are with guns or whether those wars are with words, they are defended and they are established by war.

Jesus says, that's the earthly kingdoms. My disciples don't fight. My disciples don't fight.

And, folk, what I'm finding, particularly in America today, is that there is a fighting spirit that has risen amongst Christians. There is an anger. And they cover it by saying it's a righteous zeal.

No, it's an anger, because your rights have been infringed upon. Because we can't meet inside there. We have to be out here in the heat.

So we're angry. And we're going to fight the government. We're going to fight this one.

We're going to fight that one. In the process, we fight one another. And we've not committed our souls to Him, because we've taken charge of our own souls.

We've taken charge of our own fate. And we say, it's up to me to defend myself. It's up to me to do what needs to be done.

No. Let's surrender ourselves to Him. Lord, I'm in your hands.

I'm not encouraging that we don't stand for truth. And you know that I do stand for truth. And I don't shirk my responsibility in speaking the truth when the truth needs to be spoken.

But I will never defend myself, for I try not to. I don't always get it right. But I try not to.

Because the moment I defend myself, what I've done is I've taken the fight out of the Lord's hands. And I've taken it upon myself. But when we suffer, we commit ourselves to God.

And how do we do that? Well, obviously, there is that spiritual process in which I commit myself to Him. And I say, Lord, it's... You see, I can't commit to Him unless I let go. Remember Paul says, that which I've committed unto Him, He's able to keep.

Now, you can't keep what you've not given Him. And you can't keep what you're still trying to hold on to. The only basis on which you can commit something is if you hand it over and you relinquish responsibility, hold, power, authority, whatever.

It's yours. You deal with it. I guess we use that word... We use that word often in funerals, when we speak about the fact that we commit the body to the earth.

Now, what have you done? You've put that body six feet down, and you've covered it with soil, and it's gone. There is no way you can pull it back up again. There's no way you can resuscitate it.

It's committed to the ground. It's committed to the earth. It's gone.

And unless we are able to commit our souls to Him and say, Lord, it's in Your hands, the moment I take it back upon myself again, I've not committed my soul to Him. And then he says, in doing good. So, the first step is to commit myself in a real way, to hand it over to God.

The second thing is to do good. So, how do I know faith? I know faith by works. How do I know repentance? I know repentance by works.

So, how do I know that I have committed my soul to Him in doing good? Or committed my soul to Him? I know it by doing good. And doing good to those who harm us. Now, I'm not suggesting that we keep going back for punishment by no means.

But don't repay evil for evil. But rather repay evil with good. Because in so doing, you will heap coals of fire on the head of your enemy.

And so, that's where it's hard. Because I can say, well, I've committed myself to Him. I've handed it over to Him.

It's now His problem. But until I'm able to put that into practice and begin to actually do good to those who seek my harm, I haven't really handed it over. I'm still holding the grudge.

I'm still holding the chit, the invoice, the bill. And I want payment. I want vengeance.

But if I've handed it over in doing good. Now, he says, as to a faithful creator. Now, why does he not say, as to God? Because he's reminding us that God is the beginning and the end of all things.

He is the creator. He has made us. He has made the universe.

He has made the world. So, He is not some weak friend. You know, we have friends who really are good friends.

But they're helpless. I have a friend who's in a very, very... In fact, I have a couple of friends who are in very difficult situations right now. And I'm going to ask for prayer for a couple of them afterwards.

Without getting into too many specifics. But I feel helpless. Because I can't do anything to help them.

I can just pray for them. But God is the creator. He has power.

He has authority. He can deal with things. He can change things.

And so, we're not on our own in this. The one who is with us in this suffering and in the trial is the creator. The great I am.

And He is faithful. He is faithful. He will never leave us, nor forsake us.

He will never fade when we find ourselves. There are fair weather friends who fade when things are hard. He will never fade.

He will never run away like the disciples ran away from Him. Like Peter ran away from Him. But He is faithful.

And He is the creator. And folks, here's the thing. When our eyes... And I've been saying this for the last six months again and again.

If your eyes are on the Lord Jesus, you will be able to walk on the water. Maybe physically, that's another story. But on the waters of storms and of trials and of difficulties, you will be able to walk on those waters and they will not overwhelm you.

Because your eyes are on Jesus. You've committed your soul to Him who is the faithful creator. But if you take your eyes off the Lord Jesus and you begin to look at what's going on on Facebook.

If you start looking what's going on amongst your friends. What's going on in the churches. What's going on in the country.

You will be overwhelmed. And folks, I'm encouraging you. Be careful the extent to which you allow yourself to have your eyes on all of these things.

Let's get our eyes on Jesus. I'm not saying let's not be informed. And in fact this week I made a very conscious decision about a number of things that I watch and that I use as new sources.

And I'm not going to get into the details but I've reviewed all of that again. There are certain things I will watch and certain things I will not watch. Because they get under my skin.

They get to my heart. And they contaminate me with bitterness, with frustration, with anger. He is the faithful creator.

Now why did I go to chapter 5 verse 1? Because this is a whole other subject. But in fact it continues. The elders who are among you I exhort who am a fellow elder.

And here's the bit that I want to take from chapter 5. A witness of the sufferings of Christ. What changed Peter from the one who was ready to pull out his sword and chop off every head that he could find to this man who says surrender yourself to him. Don't react.

Don't respond. Commit yourself to him who judges righteously. What got him from there to here? He witnessed the sufferings of Christ.

And folk we come back and here is the very foundation of our faith. The sufferings of Christ. And we can argue about our rights.

We can argue about you know I'll take you to court. I'll do this. I'll do that.

I have this. I have that. I have the other thing.

But when we see Jesus on the cross it must change our perspective. It must change our responses. It must change the way that we look at others.

So he was reviled. He reviled not again. And you remember there was that centurion who watched Jesus die.

And when it was all done he said this is the Son of God. What changed his mind? Witnessing the sufferings of Christ. If there is bitterness in your heart towards a brother.

If you feel the need to defend your faith by fighting. Whether in the Supreme Court or whether on Facebook. I question whether you've witnessed the sufferings of Christ.

Because it's not just what he suffered but it's how he suffered. How he dealt with the Roman whip. How he dealt with the mocking.

How he dealt with the mockery of the king. How he dealt with the spitting. How he dealt with the pain.

How he dealt with my sin being laid upon him. If that doesn't change who I am. If it doesn't change my perspective nothing ever will.

So I have to get back to the cross. And this is where Peter is ending or where I'm going to end this part tonight. It must begin and it must end at the cross.

And if the cross is not real. If it is not the very foundation of your thinking and of your philosophy and of your approach and of your actions and of your reactions. You better get back to that cross.

And be a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Father we thank you for your word. Lord these are difficult things and yet Lord we thank you for the Lord Jesus who went before us.

And Lord we cannot even begin to compare our difficulties and our trials and our sufferings. And even Lord the worst sufferings that will still come upon us. We can't begin to compare that with what Jesus

endured for us upon the cross of Calvary.

But Lord I pray that you would help us to be like Jesus. Lord I pray that you'd help the church in America and the church in the West who seem to take their cues from some kind of secular mentality and not from Jesus. Lord we need to be like Jesus.

Lord we want to be like you. We want to be like you. Because that's why you saved us that we may be conformed to the image of your son.

And Lord we say that and we quote those verses and Lord we want that to be true in theory. But Lord help it to be true when it comes to how we respond to those who persecute us. To those who spitefully use us.

To those who mistreat us. Lord I pray for each one here this evening who has suffered hurt and pain during this last week. And Lord I pray for each one who will.

And Lord we all will. I pray Lord that you'd help us. That we'd be an example to the world.

That we'd be an example to the so-called church of a godly response. Of a godly people who have committed themselves to him. Who judge us righteously.

I pray Lord that this may be real. Touch our hearts. Change our hearts Lord.

Lord there is so much of our human nature and of our carnality left in each one of us Lord. And it just rises up within us from time to time. Help us Lord to put to death the deeds of the flesh.

That we might be alive in you. I ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

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