

# Day 188, 1 Peter 4

by David Servant

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*David Servant emphasizes the importance of suffering in the Christian life as a means to holiness and spiritual growth.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:6

**Topics:** "Suffering And Persecution", "Faith And Discipline"

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## Description

David Servant preaches on the purpose of suffering in the life of a believer, emphasizing that God allows suffering to discipline His children, motivate them to stop sinning, and test their faith. Persecution can be a sign of God's discipline or a test of faith, ultimately leading to blessings and rewards in heaven. Peter encourages believers to rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Christ, knowing that it leads to exultation at the revelation of His glory.

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## Transcript

Who wants to suffer? Not me! Who may want me to suffer? God!

Why is that? He wants me to be holy, and "he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (4:1-2). Pain, when it is associated with sin, has a way of motivating us to stop sinning--to escape the pain. That is why spanking disobedient children is a smart idea. And God is certainly that smart. "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Heb. 12:6).

God often disciplined wayward Israel by means of their enemies. He permitted various nations to persecute His people in order to bring them back to Him. And the New Testament teaches that God sometimes permits persecution in order to discipline His wayward children as well. I would not, however, jump to the conclusion that persecution is always an indication of God's discipline. God may also permit persecution as a test. Peter affirmed this when he wrote, "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" (4:12). The intended recipients of his letter were being maligned and reviled for their holy lifestyles and love for Christ (4:4, 14). But Peter wrote that they should count themselves blessed, because their sufferings were proof that "the Spirit of glory and of God" rested upon them (4:14).

This was not, of course, Peter's original thought. Jesus told His followers that they were blessed when they were persecuted for the sake of righteousness, as it was a sure indication that they were on the way

to heaven, where their reward would be great. When we arrive in heaven and see the rewards that are given to those who suffered the most, I suspect we will wish that we had suffered more persecution on earth. So it makes sense to follow Peter's admonition, "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" (4:13).

What did Peter mean when he wrote that the gospel has "been preached even to those who are dead" (4:6)? I don't think he meant that the gospel had been preached to people after they died physically, as there is no other scripture that would support such an idea. So the only other possibility is that Peter was speaking of the fact that the gospel had been preached to people who are spiritually dead. Peter did say that the reason for this was that "they may live in the spirit according to the will of God" (4:6), indicating that it was spiritual death and life that he had in mind. Yet his writing in that particular verse is admittedly not as clear as we would like it to be.

Praise God for everyone who has received some special gift from God that has been graciously given to them to benefit the body of Christ. Those who have gifts should never forget that a stewardship has been entrusted to them and that they will have to give an account. Peter first lists those who have been given speaking gifts. They should, he said, not speak their own ideas or theories, but "the utterances of God" (4:11). How many sermons meet that condition?

This chapter ends with sobering words: "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?" (4:17). God was examining all those who claimed to be His own, and He was disciplining those who were falling short of His expectations in order to purify them to ensure their ultimate salvation. According to Peter, people who are unrighteous don't have a chance of being saved, because "it is with difficulty that the righteous are saved" (4:18). So let us trust God as He works to make us holy.

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