

1 Peter 4:12-13

Suffering Should Not Surprise or Subdue Christians

Don't Be Surprised by Suffering in the Christian Life 4:12

Beloved

the original readers were definitely believers see 1:3-9

do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you

The grammar of the Greek text expresses the idea of “stop being surprised...”

IOWs: this command addresses our thinking/our expectations about life in the now

fiery ordeal: for the original readers would have been the unfair/undeserved suffering of direct persecution, but the basic principle can be applied to all kinds of unfair suffering

which comes upon you for your testing

this “testing” isn't so that God can “know/see” the depth of our faith but so that the world can! (This is testing that gives a platform to demonstrate our faith not testing to neutralize our faith).

as though some strange thing were happening to you

strange in this context means “outside of God's plan/providence” such thinking while common (and I have thought this way many times) ultimately is strange for Christians because among other reasons: 1: the symbol of our Christian faith is a cross (Not a couch) and 2: our Savior promised us many times (Jn 16:33; Matt 5:10-12) we will face suffering in this life and 3: The entire premise of the Book of 1 Peter is that Christians will face suffering....and deals suffering in the Christian life because of our faith not suffering in the Christian life because of a lack of faith.

One Helpful Way to Think About Suffering (Three Categories)

1: Bad Suffering (1 Peter 2:20; 4:15)

Problems we cause or make worse because of sinfulness/selfishness/short-sightedness

2: Good Suffering (1 Peter 3:17; 4:14)

Problems that come as a direct result of our faith and our walk with Christ

3: Inevitable Suffering (Psa 73:26; Rom 8:22; 1 Cor 15:42-44; 2 Cor 5:1-2; 1 Peter 1:24)

Problems that come because we are physical beings in a fallen/dying world

Don't Be Subdued by Suffering in the Christian Life 4:13

But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ keep on rejoicing
sharing the sufferings "of Christ" here refers not to "sufferings belonging to Christ" (possessive) but "the kinds of suffering caused by our being associated with/connected to Jesus"

Joy and Happiness are NOT the Same Thing

1: Happiness is the result of positive happenings/circumstances

(In my life for example once every 8-10 years when OSU beats OU in football)

2: Joy is the inner contentment of the soul that is resting in Jesus Christ. It transcends our circumstances. It has an emotional range from stability to ecstatics. It is like being in the eye of a hurricane-it is a calmness despite the problems/chaos that surrounds us. Believers can experience this blessed assurance if/as we profoundly rest in who Jesus is, what Jesus had done for us, and what Jesus will do for us for all eternity. Joy despite difficult circumstances is a major theme of the URD (John 13-17) and the Book of 1 John

WARNING LABEL: Don't miss the point about 1 Peter 4:12-13 and similar statements (1 Thessalonians 5:18 comes to mind). We are rejoice in/give thanks "in" (NOT "for") all things...we don't rejoice in murder or adultery (Romans 12:15) but even in horrific circumstances we can rejoice IN Christ. While permits evil, He does not promote it. In His sovereignty, God providentially uses all things (Romans 8:28) to produce greater (including eternal) good things (the ultimate example is the cross of Christ).

so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation

This special kind of rejoicing when the Lord comes for us or takes us home (John 14:1-3)

is true for at least two reasons 1: The tougher the battle.....the more terrific the victory

2: Just like soldiers who excel under fire receive special commendation/medals;

Christians who excel under fire will receive special commendation/rewards

Take This to Heart

Suffering Should Not Surprise or Subdue Christians

Rather than being surprised when BIG ONES hit us, we can actually rejoice by remembering 1: we are "sharing" the sufferings of Christ now and 2: we will share superlative blessing/glory with Christ in the eternity (1 Corinthians 3:14-15).