

## HOPE IN THE FIRE

Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin—in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God’s will. For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. They are surprised that you don’t join them in the same flood of wild living—and they slander you. They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged in the flesh according to human standards, they might live in the spirit according to God’s standards.

The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God’s words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler. But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name. For the time has come for judgment to begin with God’s household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God?

And if a righteous person is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good. (1 Peter 4:1-19)

*“Despair is suffering without meaning.”* Viktor Frankl

1. Suffering conforms our character.

*“Man cannot remake himself without suffering for he is both the marble and the sculptor.”* Alexis Carrel

For in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was entirely appropriate that God—for whom and through whom all things exist—should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10)

2. Suffering clarifies our focus.

3. Suffering connects us to Christ.

Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He said, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:55-56)

4. Suffering creates future joy.

Reflection Question:

How has God used suffering in your life to birth goodness?

Scripture from the CSB unless noted.