

Suffering As A Christian

1 Peter 4:12-19

Pastor John Miller

I want to read the entire text. I want you to follow with me very closely and pay attention to these marvelous words.

Peter says, “Beloved...”—verse 12—“...think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rather rejoice...”—verse 13—“...inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad with exceeding joy. If you be reproached for the name of Christ...”—you see, Peter’s writing to believers who were being persecuted, so they were being put down and reproached for the name of Christ. He said—“...happy...”—or blessed—“...are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief or as an evildoer or as a busybody in other men’s matters. But yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved...”—or saved with great difficulty—“...where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator.”

I read once that one son has God only without sin but none without sorrow. You know, every life must suffer. Even the Son of God, Who was sinless, came into the world, and He suffered. So God has only one son without sin, but He has none without sorrow. Into every life some rain, some storm, must come. Jesus said, “In this world, you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.”

So Peter’s writing to strengthen the suffering saints, to help them to stand in the true grace of God. They were facing what Peter calls “the fiery trial.” That was a persecution from the unbelieving world. And so he exhorts and instructs them concerning the inner response that they should have when they suffer. Now the context is suffering as a Christian, and he uses that phrase, “If any man suffer as a Christian.” And there are several statements made in this passage that make it clear that we can be God’s people and still suffer.

You know that Christians aren’t excluded from sorrow. Christians are not excluded from pain. Christians are not excluded from suffering and difficulty. There’s no Christian fallout shelters. God doesn’t put a bubble around you the moment you get saved. And He protects you from germs, and He watches over you and nothing interrupts you and everything is perfect. Christian’s dogs dig holes in the back yard. Christian refrigerators break. Christian’s cars break down and do not start. You know, it’s funny when you’re driving down the highway and you see a broken down car. It’s got a Christian bumper sticker on it; right? Even God’s people do suffer adversity and pain and sorrow. God never promised that the sky would always be blue and the

roses would be budding and the wind would be at our back and things would be smooth sailing. Life is full of bumps. But I like what one author said: "The bumps are what you climb on and you get closer to God."

So Peter's not only writing to persecuted Christians, but I believe these principles are so important for us in any kind of suffering. It may be sickness. It may be bereavement or loss of a loved one. It may be financial reverses—whatever it might be. It might be a marriage. Maybe it's your children. Whatever suffering you're going through, I believe that these principles are important to put into practice.

And I want to point out from this passage four inner attitudes that Peter gives us to help us in times of suffering. If you're taking notes, you can write them down. They're real clear and simple from the text. Four things to remember to do in your attitude.

Number one, we need to expect that in this world we will have suffering. And that's seen in verse 12. I want you to go back with me to verse 12. He says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Now there are two responses that we often have when suffering or sorrow or adversity comes into our lives. And those two responses are: number one, we think God doesn't love us anymore; and number two, we think this is so strange—"Why is this happening?" And so what does Peter open with in verse 12? "Beloved, think it not strange." So he answers those first two perplexing problems we have.

Number one, God loves you. Don't ever forget that. I've always appreciated that this section—and it is one unit on suffering, verses 12 to 19—that it opens with the word "beloved." Because that reminds me that God loves me, and Peter is saying, "I love you too." So never, ever, ever doubt the love of God. No matter what you see, no matter what you feel, no matter what you hear, no matter what circumstances surround your life, God loves you. And His love is uninfluenceable; He will never stop loving you. Amen? And you need to rest in that. So I love the fact that Peter opens with "beloved."

And then he says, "Think it not strange." So what's the second thing we do? We think this is weird. "I can't believe this happened to me! I read my Bible. I pray. I go to church. Not only do I go to church, I go to Revival Christian Fellowship. Not only do I go to Revival Christian Fellowship, I'm a member of the deeper life club"—which doesn't exist; I'm just kidding, by the way. You guys are like, "I wasn't invited to that." You guys freaked out a minute on that. "A deeper life club? What are we getting into?" It was a joke; okay? (If I'm going to preach on suffering, I've got to have a little humor in here.) "I'm spiritual. I pray. I give tithes of all that I possess. Why won't my car start? Why is this happening to me?" "Don't think it strange."

Now, again, another reason why I like this word, because the very word "strange"—you know what it means? It means "foreign." You know, sometimes we look at foreigners like they're strange. Their customs are different. A stranger, you know. They're a foreigner. Now the words translated here, "Think it not strange," are literally "Don't think it foreign." So what's he

trying to convey? It's part and parcel of the Christian life to suffer. That's what he's saying. It's normal Christianity. Christians suffer just like anyone else. So he's saying, "Don't freak out. Don't start thinking this is so strange. 'Why is this happening to me?'" Some translations have "alien"; "Don't think it alien or foreign to you as a Christian, a child of God, that you would suffer."

Now, does this mean that God doesn't love me? No. Does this mean God is not in control? No. There's another key word in verse 12 I want you to notice. It's the word "happened." The very end of the verse, he goes, "Don't think it strange that this fiery trial..."—Notice it's a "fiery trial." It's intended to purify them and to make them better and it's a test. God's not tempting us; He's trying us to bring out our worth—Don't think that it just "happened unto you." This is another important word. The word "happened" there means "to go together." It means "to fall in by chance." So, in other words, it didn't just happen to you.

I don't believe, as Christians, that things just happen to us. I believe they are planned for us. I believe they are ordained of God for us. I believe in God's providential care. And I do believe that God, in His love, will many times allow something to come into our lives that we may view as bad, but God intends it for good. Someone said, "God, rather than not to allow evil to exist, chose to bring good out of evil." Remember when Joseph said to his brothers, "You meant it for evil, but God intended it for..."—what?—"...good." As you look at Joseph's story, you go, "Bad, bad, bad, bad," but God's saying, "No. Good, good, good, good." And you don't understand until you get into later chapters. Well, we need to wait until God makes the reasons very clear. We don't know. We trust Him.

But God doesn't just let things happen to you. That sickness, that bereavement, that loss, that job situation, your rebellious kids—God's in control. He can use that. Not necessarily that everything that's bad is sent from God, but I do believe it's allowed by God, and it's under His providential care and control. Like Job, He puts a hedge around us, and nothing can come through that hedge to touch us but what God approves of; amen? So we need to remember that; we need to rest in that. Jeazwell Sanders said, "Every adverse experience, when rightly received, can carry its quota of good." The key is "when rightly received." That's why I believe we need to embrace our sorrows. Someone said, "He who enlists under the banner of a crucified Christ need not be surprised if hardship, conflict and suffering follow." When Jesus said, "Follow Me," and we're following a crucified Christ, why are we surprised when sorrow and suffering come to us? So here's step number one. Expect suffering. We're in a world of suffering, and Christians are not exempt.

Here's the second point that he makes, in verses 13 and 14. Rejoice in suffering. Now I know you're saying, "Well, Pastor John, I can expect suffering. I realize that we live in a sinful world; we live in a fallen world. But there ain't no way that you're gonna get me to rejoice in my suffering!" I want you to notice it in verse 13. He's saying there, "But..."—intending there to be a contrast. In other words, verse 12, don't "think it strange" but "...rejoice..."—verse 13—"...inasmuch..."—now he gives us reasons why we should rejoice—"...as you are partakers of Christ's suffering. And when His glory is revealed, you may be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached..."—verse 14—"...for the name of Christ, happy..."—or "blessed"—"...are you,

for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.”

So in verse 13 we have this sharp contrast: “but...rejoice.” Now the word “rejoice” means to be “constantly rejoicing.” Not in your circumstances, but in the Lord. The Lord is our strength, and we rejoice in the Lord. We don’t rejoice in our circumstances. We rejoice in the Lord. And, by the way, in the Greek, this statement “but...rejoice” is what’s called an imperative. That means it’s a command. It’s not an option. God is actually commanding us to rejoice. And it’s what’s called the present tense. That means we ongoingly, continually rejoice in the Lord.

Remember in Acts 5 when the Apostles were beaten and told no longer to preach in the name of Jesus? They departed from the presence of the council, who had beaten them unjustly, unrighteously. And what did they do? They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. We should do the same. Jesus said in Matthew 5:12, “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.” You’re in good company. Rejoice.

And then in James 1:2 he says, “My brethren, count it all...”—what?—“...joy.” “Count it all joy,” which is a financial term: counting money, banking, count it, figure it out. That it’s all a joy when you suffer trials and troubles and adversity. You go, “Well, you gotta be a little more concrete here, Pastor John. I have difficulty rejoicing in the midst of suffering.” Let me point out in verses 13 and 14 some reasons why and how we can rejoice in our suffering.

Number one, our suffering means fellowship with Christ. I want you to see that in verse 13. Our suffering means fellowship with Christ. “But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” You would become a partaker of Christ’s sufferings. Now Jesus suffered on the cross to pay for our sins, and we can have no part in that. But we can be identified with Christ and suffer with Him in a secondary sense of being identified with Christ as His follower. And what it does is it brings me into a deeper, special, joint participation, a fellowship with Christ. I want you to see that we are in fellowship with Christ through our suffering.

Paul says this in Philippians 3:10. He said, “That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection...”—you’re with me so far; I want to know Him—“...and the fellowship of His...”—what did he say?—“...sufferings.” I want to know God. I want to know the power of His Resurrection. “Yah, I’m with you Paul. I like that.” I want to know the “fellowship of His suffering.” “No, I’m not with you, Paul. I skip that part. I’m not, like, one of those into-suffering-Christians stuff.” Did you notice that when we read that passage, “suffer as a Christian”—it’s in the Bible—it’s one of the three places in the New Testament that the word “Christian” appears, by the way, with the word “suffering.” And then he goes on, if you’re suffering “according to the will of God,” verse 19. If you’re suffering in the will of God. So you can be a Christian, in the will of God, and you can still suffer. It’s part and parcel. You can rejoice. It brings me into a deeper fellowship with Him.

Write this down. Second reason we should rejoice in our suffering is our suffering now means

glory in the future. So if we suffer now, it means we'll share in His glory in the future. Notice in verse 13 again. "That when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." Isn't that great? So we have a deeper fellowship with Christ, and we have the guarantee that one day, if we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him. Paul said in Romans 8:18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." So, yes, we suffer now, but we have glory in heaven. But we rejoice on the way to heaven. D.L. Moody said, "A little faith will take your soul to heaven, but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul." I love that. All it takes is a little faith and a great Savior. But if you want to have God's peace and God's joy and hope right now in your heart, then the more you trust God, the more you'll experience that fellowship and anticipate the glory that is yours.

But thirdly, let me point out in verse 14 why we should rejoice in our suffering. And that is because our suffering brings to us the ministry of the Holy Spirit. What could be more important than that? When I suffer, there's a special dose—and pardon the expression—of the Ghost—dose of the Ghost of the Holy Spirit that comes upon believers. Notice it in verse 14. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you..."—why?—"...for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." Oh, I love that. "The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." In other words, when you suffer, God sends His Holy Spirit to give you His special endowment power and of His presence in your life.

I think of the story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. How fitting that his name was Stephen, which is Stephanos, from which we get our word "crown." It means "victor's crown." And he was the first to wear the martyr's crown. And he was stoned to death for preaching the Gospel. Can you imagine dying by people throwing rocks at you? I've often thought, "Wow! That's a horrible way to die." Just being rocked to death, stoned to death. And as the stones were hitting Stephen's body, the Bible says that those who looked on saw the face of Stephen, and that it radiated like the face of an angel. You want to know why? Because the Spirit of God and the Spirit of glory rested upon him. That's the Holy Spirit Who came upon Stephen. Stephen was called to be a martyr. Stephen had a martyr's grace.

You're called to endure bereavement, loss and pain? God will give you grace, His manifold grace. He has grace for every need we go through in life. Every sorrow, every pain, every heartache that you face in this life, God's grace is sufficient for you. "His strength is made perfect in your weakness." So along with Paul you can say, "I will glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For when I am weak, then am I strong." What a blessing it is to say, "Lord, I need Your strength," and then feel the Holy Spirit come upon you and strengthen you in your hour of need. So the Spirit of God and of glory rests upon us, a special dose of the Holy Spirit.

And then, fourthly, write this down, verse 14. Our suffering enables us to glorify God. I love this. Look at the end of verse 14. He says, "On their part He is evil spoke of..."—by your persecutors—"...but on your part..."—that is, the believer's part—"...He is..."—what?—"...glorified." Right? So when we suffer, what is paramount and most important is that Jesus

Christ be glorified. The most important thing isn't that you are healed. The most important thing isn't that your problem is solved. The most important thing isn't that God takes away your pain. You know what the most important thing is? That God is glorified. When you're more concerned with your comfort than you are the glory of God, your trials are going to upset you. But when you realize what's most important is that God be glorified, God be magnified—"Lord, I pray that my life and my suffering and my sorrow and my pain—whatever I'm going through—that You get all the praise, that You get all the glory." That's all that matters.

One of my favorite devotional writers is a man by the name of J.R. Miller. I'm not sure what those initials stand for. His last name's Miller; there's no relationship. This man was a pastor in America back in the '20s. A lot of his devotional books are lost and long gone. You have to kind of find them used or out of print. But he's written a lot of amazing devotional books. But he said this. He said, "A photographer carries his pictures into a darkened room, that he may bring out its features." He says, "The light of the sun would mar the impression on the sensitized plates, their features of spiritual beauty, which cannot be produced in a life in the glare of human joy and prosperity. God brings out in many a soul its loveliest qualities when the curtain is drawn, and the light of human joy is shut out." How true that is. Now we're not all photographers. We don't know a lot in this day and age of digital pictures about the dark room. But you remember the old dark rooms? They take the pictures in, and they would develop them in the dark room. The light would ruin the image.

So you know what God does? He takes us in the dark room. He's developing the image of Christ in your life. The joy, the sunshine, would mar the sensitive plates. God's trying to produce Christ's likeness in your life. I read what someone said, and I thought it was so good. He said, "God may allow us to go into the dark, but God will never be at a distance." I like that. You may be in the dark right now, but God is not at a distance. You may not feel Him or see Him or sense Him, and you may be walking in the dark, but guess what? God is right with you. Jesus said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." Right? So no matter how dark the valley is that you are passing through this morning, Jesus is right there with you. And you have to believe His promise.

So, number one, our suffering means fellowship with Christ. Number two, our suffering means glory in the future. Number three, our suffering brings to us the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Number four, our suffering enables us to glorify God.

But let me give you a third main point. How do we respond in an attitude when we suffer? Thirdly, examine your life when you're suffering. You know, the fires of affliction are meant to illuminate. The fires of the furnace God puts you in are not only meant to purify, but they bring light. Maybe there's a sin that needs to be repented of or an attitude that needs to be aligned. Maybe God's trying to get your attention.

Go with me to verse 15 of 1 Peter 4. I want you to notice this. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." Greek scholars point out that there's two groups here. The first is murderer or thief. The second group

is evildoer or busybody in other men's matters. Isn't it amazing that it goes from murderer to busybody? You know, the word "busybody" literally means sticking your nose in things you shouldn't. Getting involved in other people's affairs that are none of your business. So Peter's actually saying, "Mind your own business." If you're a busybody and you're getting persecuted, that's not righteous; okay? "Oh, persecuted for righteous' sake." No; persecuted for stupidity. That's not blessed.

But notice in verse 16, he says, "But if any man suffer as a Christian..."—there it is—"...let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come..."—verse 17—"...that judgment begins at the house of God. If it first begin with us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel?"—that is, the unbelievers. If Christians have to go through suffering, if Christians—he says, verse 18—are saved with great difficulty, they go through life with sorrow and suffering and hardship, then where shall the ungodly appear? Where are the sinners going to appear? They're going to face certainly the judgment and wrath of God.

Now, there's some questions that we need to ask ourselves whenever we pass through suffering. In verse 15, we should ask, "Am I suffering because of sin in my life?" And you don't want to get too introspect, but you do need to say, "God, what are You trying to teach me? What are You trying to show me? Are You trying to get my attention? What are You trying to show me, Lord?"

I hesitate to share this, but I'm trying to get away from mentioning it as often as I did in sometime past. But I did first service, and some expressed that they were helped by it. About five years ago, I suffered a stroke. Some of you know about that. But about five years ago—it was actually about six months before I came to Revival. And I remember when I was inserted into that ambulance and on my way to the hospital. I had to reach over and grab my right arm and kind of lift my arm up. I couldn't. I was paralyzed on my right side; my face, my side, my hip, my leg. I lost all control of my right side. And I remember when I was in the ambulance, into the hospital, ICU, I remember so clearly, God was speaking louder than I've ever heard Him speak before about things in my life. Attitudes. And my heart needed to get in tune with God, get right with God. God—I believe with all my heart to this day—was just trying to get my attention.

You say, "Well, that's pretty radical!" "Yah, but doesn't He love us?" He just loves us too much to let us go awry. He loves us so much that He'll spank us. He'll slap us down. I actually had this image of God reaching down from heaven and going [searing sound]. It felt like just this electric shock through my whole body. And I remember laying in the hospital saying, "Lord, what do You want me to know? What do You want me to say?" I've never heard God speak to me so clearly. The most powerful time in my life of fellowship with Christ and hearing the voice of God was while in an ICU ward flat on my back. And I'd never been in the hospital for anything. I've been healthy my whole life. And to this day, even neurologists are baffled as to why I even had a stroke. I know why I had a stroke. God says, "I want to talk to you [searing sound]." "Yes, Lord?" He just put me flat on my back. And there are times when I pray, "Lord, help me not to forget the lessons you taught me. Help me not to forget the things You spoke to

my heart. Lord, help me to stay close to You and dependent upon You and looking to You and relying upon You.” So examine your life. Are there areas in your life that need to be repented of, or do you need to ask God to forgive you or do you need to forsake sin?

In verse 16, ask this question. “Am I ashamed or do I glorify God on His behalf?” Don’t be ashamed if you suffer as a Christian. And I want you to notice, in verse 16, as I mention—I’ve underlined, I’ve highlighted the phrase “suffer as a Christian.” Christians actually do suffer. We’re not immune. And when you do, don’t be ashamed, but rather glorify God on His behalf.

And then, thirdly, verses 17 to 18, “Am I concerned for the lost when I suffer?” Now this is something that wouldn’t normally pass through your mind. But when I read verses 17 and 18, I’m thinking, “Why did Peter put this passage in on suffering?” He’s talking about suffering and persecution, and then he goes on to say that God “starts at the house of God.” He starts with us as Christians, that God starts with His children. And He may give them a spanking. He may do something to get their attention. And God allows us to suffer.

It even says in verse 18 that “The righteous are scarcely saved.” What does that mean? This is very simply what he means. He means that even the righteous go through suffering and hardship and trials and difficulties. They’re not immune. The word “scarcely” means “with great difficulty.” So you’re saved but you’re going to go through difficulty.

Now if Christians suffer, if Christians go through difficulty, where shall the ungodly or the sinner appear? The answer is they’re going to be judged. If God spans His own children, what do you think He’s going to do come judgment day when sinners and the ungodly and the unbelievers stand before Him? Their judgment is certain.

So we should be concerned about our witness when we suffer. You know that when you suffer, unbelievers are watching you? And we should be praying for them, and we should want to honor God so that we don’t stumble them. I think of Paul and Silas in Acts 16 when they were beaten and thrown into prison in Philippi. They hadn’t done anything wrong. They were preaching the Gospel. They were beaten up by the Roman magistrates, thrown into the inner prison, their feet and hands were fast in stocks and it’s midnight. What do they do? Start singing; right? What else do you do when you’re beaten up and thrown into prison? Start singing. Didn’t Peter just say, “Rejoice”? So I can almost—in my sanctified imagination—see Paul turning to Silas and saying, “Silas, let’s sing.” And Silas saying, “If I weren’t in a stock right now, I’d slap you. We’ve been beaten. We’ve been thrown in prison. And besides that, it’s midnight. And you want to sing? Ain’t no way!”

Now that’s not how the story goes. You go, “What translation is that? That’s not how the story goes.” The Bible says Paul and Silas began to sing. And I love that little phrase in the passage. “And the prisoners heard them.” I’ve always wondered why Luke included that segment, “And the prisoners heard them.” You want to know why? Because they were a witness in their suffering. These guys were like, “I don’t know who those dudes are. Man, singing down there in cell block number 9. I don’t know where they get that joy.” But they were

a witness in that time. And guess who else heard them? The jailer. And at that moment—you know the story—God sent an earthquake, and the prison doors were opened, their bands were loosed. And the jailer, thinking the prisoners had escaped, pulled out his sword to take his life. And what did Paul do? He yelled out in the darkness, “Do yourself no harm! We’re all here.”

Now, again, God forgive me. I have a different version in my mind. I would think I would just keep quiet until the dude took his life. I would have, “Shhh. Silence! When he hits the ground, we book it outta here.” A big smile on my face. “Hey, we’re gettin’ out!” But Paul had a concern. He saw it as an opportunity. “We’re gonna witness to this dude!” “We’re all here! Don’t kill yourself!” And because he heard their songs and he saw their joy and was struck by the miracle, he grabbed a light, and he came into the inner cell, and he fell down before Paul and Silas and he said, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul gave him the message. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved.” The Philippian jailer and all his family came to Christ. God used their suffering, as they were a good witness, to win these unbelievers.

So I don’t know what you’re passing through. I don’t know what sorrow or pain you’re experiencing right now, but be careful. The world is watching you. Your kids are watching you. As a matter of fact, if you’re Christian parents and you have young children in your home, nothing more important than for them to watch mom and dad when they go through hard times to have the joy of the Lord and the peace of the Lord and to trust the Lord. If you fret and you worry and you’re afraid, what message are you sending your children? God can’t be trusted. And they’re going to grow up learning—they’re learning by your example, not by what you say. So keep in mind others are watching when you go through this time of suffering.

Let me give you the fourth and last attitude we need to maintain when we go through suffering. And this is perhaps my favorite, verse 19, because it is a summary verse. And that is, commit yourself to God when you suffer. Simple but simply profound. Commit yourself to God’s care and keeping. Look at verse 19. “Wherefore...”—so it’s a summary; “so then”—“...let them that suffer according to the will of God...”—again, note that. Not only do Christians suffer, but Christians suffer smack dab in the center of God’s will. “Let them that suffer according to the will of God...”—what do they do?—“...commit the keeping of their souls to Him...”—that is, God —“...in well doing, who is a faithful creator.” Someone said, “I must leave to God all that depends on Him and think only of being faithful in all that depends upon myself.” All that I’ve seen teaches me to trust God for what I have not seen. He’s the faithful creator. I’m only giving back to God that which is His: my heart and my trust. So Peter summarizes in verse 19, “Wherefore.”

Now I want you to notice that our suffering does not come to us at the caprice, blind chance but in harmony with God’s loving will. We’re suffering according to the will of God. You say, “Well, Pastor John, why is this such a big deal with you?” You know, I grew up in a church that was kind of common to hear in the church I grew up in as a kid, that if you’re not wealthy and you’re not healthy, you’re out of the will of God. This isn’t just some false teaching theory that I oppose; I was there. I experienced it. I heard it. I heard one preacher one time—I had a friend

whose guest preacher showed up at their church. The first thing the preacher did at the beginning of the sermon was he took out his wallet, opened his wallet, took out a \$100 bill and said to the people, "If you don't have \$100 in your wallet, you're out of the will of God." I've never been in God's will. Wow! This preacher's wallet rarely has a \$100 bill in it. "If your not healthy and wealthy, then you're out of the will of God."

Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing could be further from the truth. Don't ever let anyone tell you—preacher or no preacher—that because you have cancer, God hates you, God is punishing you and you're out of His will. A Christian can get cancer and die and be smack dab in the center of God's loving plan and purpose for their life. You go, "I don't like this preaching." It's true. God never promised that life would be smooth. God never promised you that life would be easy. God never promised that you would have perfect health and abundant wealth. God never promised that your wallet would have at least \$100 in it. But what He has promised is, "I'll never leave you and I'll never forsake you." Amen? And He has promised that whenever you go through suffering, the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God would rest upon you. Others may blaspheme God and put down Jesus, but on your part, He can be glorified. So "Rejoice," Peter says.

And here's the word. Here's the word, verse 19—I haven't finished yet. "Commit." You might say, "Have yourself committed." You know this word "commit" is a banking word? Don't miss it. It's a banking word. It means we continually entrust ourselves to God's protective care. As you deposit money in the bank—and you do that hopefully for safekeeping. Very few people put it in the mattress anymore or stick it in the sock drawer. Remember when the bank would actually take your money, no matter how much? I remember when I was a kid I opened up a savings account with \$10. It dropped down to 50 cents. I mean, the bank doesn't even want your money. You could have \$100 deposit in the bank, and it's like, "That's not enough to have it in the bank." "You don't want my money?" "No; it's not enough. You gotta give us more." And then they don't give you interest anymore—that had nothing to do with this point. I wanted to rail on banks for a while. If you're a banker, come up after service and I'll pray for you. It's like, "You don't want my money? You're not going to give me interest? I'll stick it in the mattress."

But the idea is safe deposit. You put it in God's trust. You know, I find myself, when I'm counseling people who are going through suffering and passing through the furnace of affliction, 99.9% of the time, the only thing I have to say to them is, "Trust the Lord. Put it in His hands." There's nothing you can do anyway. "Well, can't we figure something out? This guy's really rippin' me off and, you know, I want to sue him. I want to beat him up! Don't you guys have a beat-up club here at Revival? Isn't that Biblical? It's called 'laying on of hands.' Let's go lay hands on him." "No, we don't do that." The Bible says, "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. I will repay." Right? You could get yourself in big trouble. You could go to jail taking vengeance on your own. Put it in God's hands. And I don't care if it's your marriage, I don't care if it's your health, I don't care if it's your wealth, I don't care if it's your kids, your grandkids, your job, your occupation—whatever it is—put it in God's hands. A better place to put your troubles.

Now we get there in a couple of weeks, but I can't resist in pointing it out. Look at 1 Peter 5:7.

“Casting all your...”—what?—“...cares upon Him, for He...”—what?—“...cares for you.” Isn’t that great? Leave with that this morning. The psalmist says, “Roll thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you.” “Casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Let’s pray.