

# The Pattern of Jesus in the Life of the Christian

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] in this letter of 1 Peter. And this morning we begin the third and final section of that letter. And in this final section, Peter takes something that has been an underlying theme throughout the letter, something that we've spoken about a number of times over the last couple of months, but he really brings it kind of front and center to close with. And that is the idea of suffering and particularly Christian suffering. In this final section, Peter shows that those who suffer for the sake of the gospel are following in the footsteps of Jesus who suffered to achieve the gospel. And yet more than that, Peter is going to show us how as Jesus rose again and is now glorified, so this path through suffering leads to glory for his followers as well. That pattern, of suffering and then glory is really kind of the headline over the close of this book, over this final section. Let me just give you a few examples so you don't just have to take my word for that. Do have a look down verse 13, which we'll be looking at this morning.

See there, it says how those sharing Christ's suffering may be glad when his glory is revealed. Suffering then glory. Have a look down chapter 5 verse 1, which we'll see next week. Those who are witnesses of the suffering of Christ, as well as partakers in the glory, suffering and glory.

Or verse 10 that we'll see the following week, which speaks about suffering a little while, but being called into God's eternal glory in Christ. This pattern of suffering and then glory is the pattern of Jesus. And Peter really wants to kind of imprint that pattern into the life of followers of Jesus, onto the life of Christians. And so as we start looking at this third section and what we look at this morning, here's the rub really, that if we want to experience the glory of God in our lives, and collectively as well, if we really want to be a church that displays, that bears witness to, that is pointing to the glory of God, well then Peter's going to tell us that we need to be prepared for suffering, as that is the path to glory. That was the path for Jesus.

That was the path for his followers. So there's a kind of challenging thought there, isn't there? Maybe a more positive way to think about it is this. Peter is going to say that suffering might be God's will for your life, actually, that we should expect that. And yet maybe here's a more positive way of thinking about that. Incredibly, we are able to hope in a foundation to life that means that suffering is not a reason to despair or to give up, but rather suffering is a reason to rejoice. And is the evidence Peter is going to say that you are blessed. That sounds strange, perhaps, to us, doesn't it? That's not our kind of approach to suffering normally, but that's what Peter promises here. If we really take the gospel to heart, that's what we're going to be looking at this morning. In these verses, we've kind of got two sets of contrasting responses to suffering.

It says, not that, but this, not that, but this. And then the outworking, therefore, Peter's going to say, this is our Christ-shaped response. So our first pair of responses. In suffering, don't be surprised, but rejoice. Don't be surprised, but rejoice. It's right there in verse 12, isn't it? Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. Don't be surprised. It's this warning. I'm not much of a runner. I'm not a runner at all. But I have been told that marathons are quite difficult. It doesn't matter, you know, what level you are, whether you're trying to break the world record or whether you're just trying to kind of get across the finish line. If you run a marathon, you're going to feel pain. You're going to hit the wall, as they say. You know, you can't be surprised about that. In a marathon, I'm told, it's going to hurt. That doesn't mean you're doing it wrong, but you need to know that to keep on going so that you don't quit when things get tough. That's a bit like what Peter is saying in these verses, that in following Jesus, that will bring suffering. There will be those hard times. And I love Peter's, in fact, the whole Bible's honesty on this. It's not a kind of secondhand car salesman trying to hide all the issues under the bonnet. The Bible is really clear. We should expect the Christian life to include suffering. In suffering, don't be surprised.

[ 5 : 07 ] And remember the kind of suffering as well that we're speaking about here through 1 Peter, because it's not just the kind of suffering that everybody goes through. The suffering of sickness, of hardship, of life in a broken world. That is hard. Those are difficult things. And being a Christian doesn't magically remove that. Not yet. Not before Jesus returns. But actually, the particular situation and suffering that Peter has in mind and that his readers are going through is the kind of suffering that comes specifically because they are following Jesus. We've seen it a number of times already in this letter. It's the suffering of what people might say about them.

It is the suffering of not completely fitting in. It is the suffering of having to make tough choices as we have different priorities. It's the suffering of having to make sacrifices in life.

That's what Peter is speaking about here. Remember that kind of controlling image Peter introduced his whole letter with right back at the start of chapter 1 of being elect exiles. And this is the suffering of being away from home. Having a different king, a different purpose, a different whole direction and trajectory of life. And so we shouldn't be surprised when at times that causes difference, when that causes friction, when that doesn't just neatly fit in with the world around us. And in fact, what should be surprising, perhaps what should concern us even, would be if our Christian life never caused us any cost at all. Again, remember that exile's language. Imagine you are suddenly dropped into a different country with a different culture, living under a completely different authority. It would be surprising, wouldn't it, if there was nothing about your life that was slightly different. It would be surprising, wouldn't it, if you didn't kind of cut across the grain in some ways, if you didn't stick out slightly. Or think of a marriage. I spoke to a young guy recently, asked him how married life was. He said, well, married life is just exactly the same as my life before I got married. I've not had to change a single thing. I asked him how long he'd be married for. He said it was nearly three weeks. And I would be surprised if I asked him in three months or in three years if there aren't some areas of life where that new relationship hasn't had to bring about a degree of change. That is what Peter is saying about our relationship with God. If our Christian life, now that we have a completely different authority in life, pattern in life, purpose in life, if that just seamlessly fitted around everything else and never led to hard decisions or unpopular decisions, you know, that would be, that would be a surprising thing. And not least, Peter makes the point when we consider Jesus and the consequences, how the world responded to him when he walked on earth.

Yeah. So in suffering as a Christian, don't be surprised, Peter says. But more than that, he says, don't be surprised, but rejoice. Amazingly, Peter is not just saying, you know, suck it up. It's tough, but just get on with it. He's actually saying incredibly that this suffering can bring the Christian joy. That sounds completely alien to our way of thinking, doesn't it? In our world, suffering is something to be avoided at all costs. I was hearing from a secondary school head teacher recently. He said one of the biggest challenges they're facing is that pupils, and often backed up by their parents, assume that any kind of stress or struggle is unhealthy and so needs to be completely avoided, needs to be completely cut out of their schooling, their education, their life.

Again, we can often bring that attitude into our Christian lives, can't we? What's the way out of this hardship? How can I avoid this cost? How can I make sure that my family, my children don't feel the pressure of following Jesus? And so how can Peter say instead, verse 13, don't try and avoid this, but rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering. Don't duck this challenge, but embrace it, he's saying. Incredible thing to be able to say. How can he say that? Well, two reasons that Peter gives. The first one is a future encouragement. He says, but rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. Again, this pattern that we're going to see over the next few weeks of suffering followed by glory. That means we can rejoice in the present, knowing what is to come in the future, that if we share Christ's suffering, we will share his glory. Again, that big theme of 1 Peter, of looking ahead to our eternal home, to that place, to that time when we will be exiles no more. And that our Christian suffering shows that we are on the road to that destination, following the same path of Jesus, and so having that same glory in store. So Peter gives us, when times are hard, this future encouragement, but also a very present encouragement. Verse 14, if you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. That right now, for God's people, for you and for me, if we trust in Jesus, if we are willing to take his name, even when that is tough, then we have the amazing joy of knowing God's spirit upon us, God's spirit within us right now and at every moment of every day as we walk through life. What a cause for rejoicing and celebration that is. I was away last weekend speaking to the student and young people's group at Bon Accord Free Church up in Aberdeen, and they'd asked me for the weekend to speak on the topic, on the person of the Holy Spirit.

[ 11 : 50 ] That was something a number of people had had a few questions about there. It felt like quite a big topic for one day, but it was good to be able to speak about that. And it was great to be able to have as a foundation this truth that if your trust is in Jesus, that you have his spirit to help you.

That you have everything that you need. It was striking in preparing for last weekend how often the Bible, when it is speaking about the Holy Spirit, does so with this tone of encouragement, to encourage assurance, to bring rejoicing, reminding us, as Peter does, that you have the spirit through Jesus. And so we rejoice in suffering. That's not some kind of masochism that we love to suffer.

It's that suffering for Jesus, as we saw right back in chapter one of this letter, shows that the tested genuineness of your faith is that rubber stamp that we are truly God's people.

Because we are truly God's people, we have that gift of the Holy Spirit here and now, so we're able to rejoice and we will share in that glory to come. We are able to rejoice. And here and now, whatever we face, we keep that in mind. We're not surprised by suffering and yet rejoice. We have the spirit of glory, as Peter describes in here, walking through our lives with us at every stage as we head to that destination, our eternal home and the glory that we all share. So in suffering, don't be surprised, but rejoice, Peter says. He then goes on to say the next pair, in suffering, don't be ashamed, but give glory. Don't be surprised, but rejoice. Don't be ashamed, but give glory. Verse 15, but let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Peter reminding here, he's not talking about suffering that comes from sin. Peter's saying, don't use this as an excuse to kind of be claiming false persecution when you're in the wrong. It's noticeable there, isn't it, that being a meddler, we might say kind of a busy body or, you know, sticking your nose in. It's kind of striking how that's listed here with what we think of as these much more significant sins, murderer, theft, evildoing.

I think that's kind of outlining that the balancing act that we are to live distinctively in the world as Christians in every sphere, as Peter's been emphasizing, but not to step over that line of being meddlers, of being people interfering in everyone's business. We're to have that gentleness and respect, as Peter has already said, when we deal with other people. But what Peter's saying is that even when we do that, we should expect suffering. And what Peter says here, you see it right there in verse 16, is that when that happens, don't be ashamed, but give glory. If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. That when people say to you, you're not one of those Christians, are you? Or, you know, you don't really take the Bible seriously in these areas, do you? Or, you know, a lot of Christian teaching is kind of outdated now. We know better, don't we? Or perhaps that ultimate stumbling block, if we get to this point in a conversation, you don't really think that I need forgiven through Jesus, do you? You know, when these things come, there is that huge temptation, isn't there? To be ashamed, to fluff our lines a little bit, maybe to try and dodge the question, maybe just to try and deny that's what we believe altogether.

[ 15 : 45 ] And remember, this is the apostle Peter writing this letter, who completely understands how that feels, and completely understands the temptation to do that. Because remember that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, and the night that Jesus was tried, sorry, Peter was challenged and denied even knowing him. A young girl asking him, you know, you're one of Jesus's followers, aren't you? Three times, each time Peter's saying, no, no, no, I don't even know the man. You can easily imagine, can't you? Perhaps you've experienced, you know, same kind of questions today. You know, whether it's at school, whether it's at a new workplace, whether it's among friends, whether it's neighbors, where you, you know, you mentioned that you've been out to church on a Sunday, and that temptation to just be ashamed, to try and deny it, or to play it down. You know, well, yeah, I go to church a little bit, but it's not a big deal. I'm not, you know, I'm not too full on with all that kind of thing.

Peter, speaking from his experience, his wisdom, and no doubt his pain and regret as well, as someone who did just that, it says, don't be ashamed, but glorify God in that name. Be proud to claim that label.

Absolutely, yes, I am a Christian. I am a follower of Jesus. In fact, a lot of people suggest that's probably how the term, the name Christian came about, that originally it was used as an insult.

It was a kind of a delugatory term, you know, used negatively about Jesus's followers or these Christians, but a name that actually they were happy to claim for themselves. Yeah, one who is of Christ, a little Christ, as it literally means, that they were willing to say, yeah, that fits, because we are all about Jesus Christ. And we're not ashamed of that, but instead we glorify God in that name.

Don't be ashamed, but glorify God. And again, Peter gives us the reason why here, why we should glorify God, why this is the right route forwards in the time when we're feeling the pressure of being God's people, why identifying with that name of Christ is so important. And we see it here in verses 17 and 18. For, here's the reason, for it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God.

[ 18 : 18 ] And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

Let me try and unpack those verses a little bit, because there's quite a lot in there. I think really the key for us to grasp here is that word judgment, verse 17, have a look there. That word judgment doesn't necessarily mean a negative judgment, as we might start to think. That doesn't necessarily mean a punishment. It means a decision. You think in the courtroom, the judge makes a judgment, guilty or not guilty. A judgment brings separation for better or for worse. What Peter is saying here is now is that time when people are being put into one camp or the other. That judgment, that separation is happening right now in the present as to who are God's people and who are not.

And that judgment is based on how we've responded to Jesus. Remember back in chapter 2, that is he the cornerstone of our lives or is he the stone that we stumble over and are destroyed?

And Peter says, if those who obey the gospel, that means those who have trusted in Jesus, built their lives on him, if they are saved despite difficulty, despite the suffering and the challenges that brings in this life, well then, Peter says, well, what will happen to those who reject him?

It's kind of left there as a rhetorical question, isn't it? But it's a frightening question. It's a question of eternal significance. Peter's point is that when that verdict, when that judgment is made, you want to make sure that you're on the side of Jesus. You want to make sure that the label of Christian or follower of Jesus is not one that you have let go of or rejected because you're ashamed to go through the suffering that it might bring. But rather, that is one that you have claimed, is one that you've gloried in here and now. One that you've lived out day to day in order to share God's glory for all eternity. I think probably the reality is that every day we have the opportunity in how we respond to various situations and particularly to the people that we have in our lives. Every day we have the opportunity to choose whether we will move toward

[ 20 : 59 ] Jesus, whether we will seek to glorify God in that name of Christian, whether we will kind of nail our colors to the mast a bit more, or whether we will be ashamed and try and sort of shrink back from that because it might come with a cost. Peter says, accept that cost.

Rejoice in that cost. Don't be ashamed of that cost because it is claiming for ourselves the greatest possible reward. It is those who are God's people here and now through responding to Jesus. It is them and them alone who will be God's people for all eternity, sharing in the glory that is to come. So in suffering, don't be surprised, but rejoice. In suffering, don't be ashamed, but give glory. Peter then ties this all together in our final verse, verse 19.

Knowing the assurance we can have through suffering, knowing the perfect inheritance that lies in store, the other side of suffering, knowing the connection we share with Jesus in suffering that leads to glory.

Therefore, Peter says, therefore in suffering, trust God and do good. Peter gives us this application of all that he's been talking about.

In a lot of ways, it's remarkably simple, isn't it? Verse 19, therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good.

[ 22 : 31 ] Trust God and do good. I wonder if that almost feels a little bit anticlimactic or a little bit kind of oversimplified. And yet I think the facts are when the chips are down, when times are hard, when we're suffering, especially when following Jesus increases the cost rather than smoothing the way, that is the time when it's hardest to trust, isn't it? When we wonder if God is really worth it, if God will pull through, if our relationship with God is worth the tension that is being created in our relationships with other people. That is the time when it's hardest to live as we should, to live distinctive lives, knowing that actually if we're just happy to soften up a little bit, just to go with the flow, then things will be a lot more straightforward for us, for our family, for people we know.

And yet it's precisely these times that Peter wants us to look at Jesus and follow his example. As we said earlier, to imprint that pattern of Jesus onto our lives. A willingness to pay the cost and a certainty in the glory to come. When we think of this suffering for the gospel, whatever that might look like in our lives. And we've thought of a few examples over the past couple of months going through this book.

Whether it is what people say, whether it is decisions we make about how we spend our time, our finances, our priorities, whether it is making kind of radical decisions about our career, whether it's to do with the people that we spend our time with, whether it might be moving to the other side of the world to share the gospel in a foreign country, whether it might be moving our family somewhere less desirable to support a church plant there so that other people can hear the gospel. These are all costs that Christians bear. And yet whatever our cost, whatever our suffering for following Jesus, a suffering we should expect, remember, and a suffering the Bible takes seriously and doesn't downplay, and yet none of this compares to the suffering that Jesus went through in our place.

Jesus who suffered not just the physical agony of the cross, the most painful means of torture and death ever devised, but who suffered a whole life of opposition and oppression, which he walked day by day to reach that ultimate goal of suffering for the sins of the world.

Jesus who suffered on the cross as God's righteous anger at sin, it was poured out on him. It was poured out on the righteous one so that the unrighteous, you and me, could go free.

[ 25 : 32 ] Christ suffered more than we can comprehend to bring us to God, yet he did that fully entrusting himself to a faithful creator God. Jesus' final words from the cross in Luke's gospel, the pinnacle of his suffering, he says this, Father, into your hands I commit. It's that same word translated here in Peter as entrust, Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit. Jesus who, despite the suffering, the humiliation he walked through day after day, did good, was perfectly obedient to the will of his Father so that his righteousness could be granted to us, so that by his work we can be saved. Jesus walked this path, first of all, and Jesus walked this path most perfectly of all, that we could become God's people, that we could trust in him, we could be Christians, we could claim that label and we could give glory to God in that name. And it's from that security of knowing our trust is in Jesus's finished work for us. That is how we're able, even when it's hard, to keep on entrusting our souls to God, our creator, because through Jesus, he is also our redeemer. We trust seeing in the gospel the depth of his love for us, that God, his son, not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in. We're able to trust knowing that our suffering is not a sign or a reason for surprise, it's not God's absence, it's not a lack of love from God, but we have a God who loves us with a perfect love, and our suffering is a sign that we are following

Jesus's path of suffering leading to glory, and that we have this perfect inheritance that God has won, God has promised, and God is keeping for his people. It's having that trust that means we can do good, as Peter says, here in the present. There's been so much in this letter in 1 Peter regarding our conduct, living out that identity as God's people elect exiles, whatever the cost it may bring.

How incredibly, as well, we've seen how God uses that, even our imperfect efforts for the building of his kingdom, because we know in Jesus we have reason not to be ashamed, but to give glory to God for all he has done, and to rejoice in all that he has promised us. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the wonder of the gospel, where in your great love for us, you sent your son to suffer in our place. We thank you that Jesus willingly laid down his life, that we might be forgiven. We thank you that he suffered and died, but rose again, and is now exalted in heaven, glorified above all things, ruling and reigning over his creation.

Now, Lord, we pray that you would help us to follow that path of Jesus, of being willing to suffer by being associated with him, of being willing to suffer by shaping our priorities around yours, and through that trusting our whole lives upon you, that we would know that the glory that is promised to all who depend upon Jesus, and all that he has done for us in the gospel. We thank you that that when suffering, that when pressure comes, we can rejoice knowing what is in store. We thank you for that incredible offer of the gospel, that suffering is not something that has to be avoided at all costs, that suffering is not something that means it's all gone wrong, but suffering means that we are following in the footsteps of Jesus, and as a reminder of your great love for us, that we have that very present and very real of your blessing of your Holy Spirit with us here and now, as we look ahead to the glory that we will share with you. And so, Lord, in light of the gospel, in light of what you've done, in light of what's in store, in light of who you are, we pray that you would help us to trust you and to do good. And we pray that you would help us to live as your people, that we would encourage one another in that, that we would reflect you to the world, that we would give glory to your name. And we pray that through us, you would be building your kingdom and bringing in many more people to follow Jesus with a willingness to suffer and a certainty of reaching your glory. We thank you that that invitation into your glory is available to all who would turn and put their trust in Jesus. And it is in his name that we pray. Amen.