

The Rings of the Lord

Stewards of God's Grace

I Peter 4 Since therefore *Christ suffered* in the flesh, [a] arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has *suffered* in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human *passions* but for the *will of God*. 3 For the time that is past suffices for *doing what the Gentiles want to do*, living in sensuality, *passions*, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4 With respect to this *they are surprised* when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they *malign you*; 5 but they will give account to him who is *ready to judge* the living and the dead. 6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though *judged in the flesh* the way people are, they might *live in the spirit* the way God does. 7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins*. 9 Show hospitality to *one another* without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to *serve one another*, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; *whoever serves*, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything *God may be glorified* through Jesus Christ. *To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Suffering as a Christian

12 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. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share *Christ's sufferings*, that you may also rejoice and be glad *when his glory is revealed*. 14 If *you are insulted* for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the *Spirit of glory*[b] and of God rests upon you. 15 But let *none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler*. 16 Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him *glorify God* in that name. 17 For it is time for *judgment to begin at the household of God*; and if it begins with us, what will be the *outcome for those who do not obey the gospel* of God? 18 And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”[c] 19 Therefore let *those who suffer* according to *to God's will* entrust their souls to a faithful Creator *while doing good*.

- a. 1 Peter 4:1 Some manuscripts add for us; some for you
- b. 1 Peter 4:14 Some manuscripts insert and of power
- c. 1 Peter 4:18 Greek where will the ungodly and sinner appear?

Tom informed me that I have a license to present my findings with the assumption that you read my paper. I am going to include several items that I discussed in my paper, but I want to take a little different form in my presentation.

In examining ***I Peter 4***, I found several prominent themes, including suffering, God’s will, judgment, the Spirit of God, reciprocity, and glory.

As I highlighted each theme within the text, I noted that these themes are somewhat chiasmic throughout chapter 4, yet this may be more of a coincidence. I believe that verse 11 is likely a break in the chapter, although Grudem noted that Amen does not have to be a hard stop in communication – can I get an Amen? I did find writers that identified 1-7 and 12-17 as chiasmic in structure, yet I did not find any other commentator who treated the chapter as such. I did take some time to outline the chapter as a chiasm with the prominent themes – if it is not a chiasm, it does offer a way to outline and examine the chapter.

I Peter 4 chiasm -

- V 1 – Since Christ Suffered... whoever suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin
- V 2 – Live no longer for human passion but for the will of God / not do what Gentiles do
- V 4,5 – they are surprised... malign you, him who is ready to judge
- V 6 – live in the Spirit the way that God does.
- V 8-11 – keep loving one another, hospitality to one another, serve.
- V 11 – God may be glorified / to him belong glory...
- V 12 – do not be surprised at the fiery trial... as though something strange
- V13 – when his glory is revealed
- V 13 – rejoice to share Christ's suffering
- V14 – You are blessed because the Spirit of Glory and of God rests on you
- V14,17 – insulted for the name of Christ, judgment to begin at the house of God
- V 17, 18 – outcome for those who do not obey vs those who in God's will
- V 19 – let those who suffer entrust their souls to the faithful Creator while doing good.

Although the chapter may not be a chiasm, I want to take each of these 6 themes and highlight how they appear in the chapter. Peter juxtaposes each of these themes between God and humanity within this chapter.

The central focus of this chapter in this chiastic construct would be the instructions in ***Vs. 12*** – *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.*

Before I get into the themes, I want to emphasize that this central statement is a significant encouragement from Peter amid his discussion about all the ways that suffering may occur. We are in this together, and we are in this with Jesus. This isn't strange, although our Western philosophy may attempt to set trials aside as such.

v. 12 speaks of a fiery ordeal, which may be a reference to the imagery of the refiner's fire in Proverbs 27:21. Peter speaks of a trial that tests or "proves" a person, using the same word from 1:6 (peirasmos) to indicate a positive outcome from a difficult situation.

This testing should be seen as expected in the Christian life and not considered "something strange." Christ's followers should instead rejoice that they can "share in Christ's suffering." Consider Rom. 8:17 – "Rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed." The idea of rejoicing in the midst of persecution is also in keeping with the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:11-12 states, "*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad...*" (ESV).

Peter follows his encouragement with examples of how a trial might happen. Peter states that being insulted for one's faith is instead a blessing. "For the name" or "in the name" indicates a person that is operating as Peter encouraged in v. 11. Speak and serve as one who is doing it on behalf of the Lord. The consequences of such action are noted here as having a possible hostile reception. Be aware that operating on the Lord's behalf will insight some, but it is for His glory and your blessing.

- **GLORY**

In keeping with Jesus's teaching that the first shall be last, I will begin with my last listed theme of GLORY. It is also the theme that is closest to the central statement.

I made many notes in Keller's work on suffering, but I was particularly interested in Keller's example from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings about ascribing Glory. It is this part of Keller's book and my general Nerdiness that inspired me to title my presentation Rings of the Lord... *The following appeared in Keller's book "Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering" (p.169).*

When JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy was published in the 1950's, a woman named Rhona Beare wrote Tolkien and asked him about the chapter in which the Ring of Power is destroyed in the fires of Mt Doom. When the ring is melted, the Dark Lord's entire power collapses and melts away with it. She found it inexplicable that this unassailable, overwhelming power would be wiped out by the erasure of such a little object. Tolkien replied that at the heart of the plot was the Dark Lord's effort to magnify and maximize his power by placing so much of it in the ring. He wrote: "The ring of Sauron is only one of the various mythical treatments of the placing of one's life or power, in some external object, which is thus exposed to capture or destruction with disastrous results to oneself.

Tolkien means something like this: It is one thing to love somebody and get a lot of joy out of the relationship. But if that person breaks up with you and you want to kill yourself, it means you have given that person too much glory, too much weight in your life. You have said in your heart, "If that person loves me, then I know I am somebody." But if that person then takes the relationship away, you collapse and meltdown because you have ascribed more glory and honor to him or her than to God. If anything matters more to you than God you are placing yourself and your heart into something external. Only if you make God matter the most – which means only if you glorify him and give him the glory_ will you have a safe life.

Keller further points out that the Greek word for glory is Doxa (from which we get doxology), but it is rich with meaning. It is about absolute splendor and beauty. It has a sense of wonder, luminosity, praise, beauty, and brilliance. There is a sense of not only obedience but delightful obedience that comes as a privilege and not an obligation.

Glory is mentioned four times in I Peter chapter 4 – the primary emphasis is that glory belongs to God. We can ascribe glory to many things, but where do we place this value excellent value? In relationship to fiery trials, do we practice glory to God as commonality or as something strange? The world will see you as weird if you glorify God. Where do we assign glory: what is beautiful and worthy of our praise?

- **Reciprocity**

I want to move next to a discussion of reciprocity –

I Peter 4:8-10 - 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace

Verse 8-10 speak about how we use our Grace Gifts – given by the Spirit of Glory and of God to serve one another. This idea of loving one another and serving one another is reciprocity that John identified in the upper room. To love God and love one another is one of the central themes of all of scripture.

Matthew 22:36-40 records Jesus’s reply to the religious leaders that hoped to stump him:

36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Relationships require us to love and be loved. The greatest commandment is to love God; the second is to love your neighbor as you love yourself. We could spend weeks just unfolding this statement from Jesus that agreed with the lawmakers of his time – this is one of the statements they approved. [In John 13, Jesus makes a similar statement, but it is not the same.](#) I think that the ramifications of what John records Jesus saying in the upper room the night before his betrayal is significant for many reasons and one that is paramount to our discussion of suffering and glory.

We pick up after Judas dipped in Jesus’s cup, Satan entered Judas, and then he left.

John 13:31-35 A New Commandment

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

My dissertation included an exegesis of John 13. One of the most important lessons in all of John’s writings is found when Jesus offers “a new commandment” in verse 34. Without going into great detail, it is significant that Jesus said this is a new commandment. For one thing, the canon of law was closed with Moses, and “new commandments” were not allowed. What is more curious about this claim of Jesus concerning a new commandment is that it sounds like the same old commandment... love your neighbor as you love yourself. But this statement differs. This statement includes the idea of reciprocity.

“Love one another” carries the idea of not only extending love but also freely accepting love. There is an expectation of needing “one another.” In the construction of John’s gospel, he spends the first half of the book discussing signs and miracles of Jesus. There is a significant shift from chapters 12 to 13 that moves from what most call the “book of signs or miracles” to “the book of hours.” In the middle of John 13 (which is chiasmic in structure) is “love one another.” Jesus tells his disciples to wash each other’s feet – to do this for “one another.” In verse 14, Jesus demonstrates what servant love looks like and then entreats them to both do and receive such actoin. In the Greek, “one another” is ἀλλήλων (allēlōn). I love these kinds of coincidences... we need each other – love one another – it is not good for man to be all alone...

This theme is also evident in I Peter 4 – use your gifts to love one another. Use what God has given you to love and be loved. Sometimes, you may offer help; sometimes, you may be the one who is suffering. In either situation, God can still be glorified.

- **The Spirit of God**

***I Peter 4:14** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

Michaels explored the relationship in v. 15 with the prophecy concerning the coming Messiah in **Isaiah 11**. Peter uses the phrase, “Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you.” The well-known prophecy of Isaiah would have been recognized by the readers of the time, but with the addition of “glory” and the change of tense from “will rest” to “rests.” Peter openly declares that followers will experience joy (like Jesus) when they experience suffering (like Jesus), and the Holy Spirit here, described as the “Spirit of glory and of God,” will rest upon them. Isaiah used several descriptions for the “Spirit of the Lord,” including wisdom, counsel, and knowledge. Peter here includes “Spirit of glory.” The addition of glory may be a device by Peter to attach this section to the previous conversation concerning the glory of Jesus. Grudem notes that “glory” here foreshadows heavenly blessing but also indicates the present indwelling of the Spirit.

God is the recipient of all glory, but there is also a hope for future glory that we do not yet fully grasp. **Colossians 1:27** is a powerful verse: “*God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*”

John 17:22-23 – *22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

In the salvation “timeframe” from humanity's viewpoint and with simplistic terms, we have justification (we are saved), sanctification (we are being saved), and glorification (we will be saved). There is no salvation apart from Jesus by the power of the Spirit. While there is an ultimate salvation that we regularly speak about – the hope of eternal life after we die or Jesus comes, there is also the Spirit of God with us now to make life different on earth. Peter here says that we are blessed when we are insulted for the name of Jesus – because the Spirit of glory and God rest upon us. This is not merely a consolation in hope before death but a blessing amid cursing. This is in keeping with Paul in Romans 8 – God uses all things together for good, including human cursing and maligning.

- **Judgment**

4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

A discussion of judgment flows from what Peter said about the Spirit. There is a contrast between the two statements concerning judgment in verses four and seven. Verse four speaks about how the world casts derision on followers of Christ, but God will ultimately judge them. Verse seventeen describes the need for the followers of Christ (those in the household of God) to practice discernment and to be an example to those in the world. Peter emphasizes the value of suffering for the right reason and for following the will of God the creator – which brings us to the emphasis of God’s will.

The preceding context of v. 17 is a trial that is refining in nature. Grudem noted that Peter here uses (*krima*) instead of (*katakrima*), rendered as judgment instead of condemnation. Like the refiner’s fire is a “fiery ordeal” for a positive outcome, the judgment here is a discipline for course correction, yielding a better future. Grudem suggests that God has “begun judging within the church and will later move outward.”

This exhortation from Peter in verse 17 hearkens back to the judgment mentioned in Ezekiel 9 concerning judgment beginning with the elders in v. 6. Grudem concludes that Ezekiel 9 would have likely been in Peter’s thoughts as he penned this instruction. Judgment begins with God’s house, meaning with his people, who now represent the house built together.

Grudem also agrees with Johnson that Peter’s imagery here may be even more influenced by Malachi 3 than Ezekiel 9. Malachi speaks of the coming judgment of the temple (house of God) and a “refiner’s fire,” which Peter has also mentioned. This employment of Malachi’s refiner’s fire lends more to a sense of purification as the reason for judgment.

- *God’s will*

*2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human **passions** but for the **will of God**.
19 Therefore let **those who suffer** according **to God’s will** entrust their souls to a faithful Creator **while doing good**.*

The contrast that Peter offers at the beginning and the end of this passage is about the will of God and the reasons that people are willing to suffer. The words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane address the will of God and suffering – our last two themes. Jesus asks three times for the cup (of suffering) to pass and then concludes with, “Not my will, but yours be done.” I find it disturbing to my humanity that Jesus agonized to the point of sweating blood when contemplating this great suffering... He even decried that his will in his humanity was contrary and, therefore, had to be submitted to God the Father.

Gethsemane is also supremely comforting – knowing that having a human will contrary to God the Father is a reality we all must grapple with, yet Christ made a way and invited us into it. There is a suffering that has an eternal purpose for both the one that suffers and for the benefit of others. Sacrificial love is not easy for the one sacrificed – but it is the highest form of love and the utmost passion.

Heb. 12:2 – *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

- Suffering

Three Rings of Marriage / humor

- The Engagement ring
- The wedding ring
- The Suffering

Attributed to Woody Allen, it is meant as a joke... yet there is some profound truth in it, too.

Each of these rings represents a covenant – first promised – then bonded together with rings and vows – then the fulfillment of vows... rich or poor, sick or in health, good times and bad until death do us part. **Expect joy and suffering.**

Chapter 4 begins and ends with an emphasis on suffering

1 Peter 4:1-2 (all scripture from ESV)

¹ Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions [desires] but for the will of God.

*19 Therefore let those who suffer according to **God's will** entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

Michaels discusses the difficulty of “ceased from sin” in application to what Christ has accomplished. Christ has not ceased from sin in the sense that he has first personally sinned, but he has ceased from having to deal with it. “Christ suffered for sin,” in the past tense, indicates that it is finished (as he declared on the cross), but his suffering was for our sins. Christ suffered, and it was for the sake of sin, but that is now finished.

To “arm yourselves with the same way of thinking” is to have the mindset of Paul in **Gal. 2:19-20**: “I am crucified with Christ; I live, and yet it is not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith for the Song of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Since Christ suffered in the flesh, we should “arm [our]selves” with the “same way of thinking” to “cease from sin.” Sin is an archery term for “missing the target.” One who is armed with Christ’s way of thinking is no longer shooting at the wrong target. Human passions are aimed at a different target, and although the shots may be landing, they are not Christlike in aim. There is a human way of thinking that pulls us into sin. James addresses this in James 1.

James 1:2,3,14

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

There is a battle between human will or desire and the will of God. Now, we must live for the will of God, proclaiming, “Not my will but yours be done.” Jesus declared this in Gethsemane, enveloped by tremendous suffering - the *Via Delarosa* – the way of suffering. He was sweating blood as his anticipation weighed the coming event. He prayed all night and asked three times for a different way.

Contrasting of passion/desire (garden) and passion/suffering (Cross)

It is Christlike not to desire physical suffering but also Christlike to yield and submit your will to the perfect will of God.

Human Passions (Here in I Peter 4 as cravings, lust, natural desire) – this word for passion (*ἐπιθυμία* *epithymia*)ⁱ is different than the passion of the cross (*πάσχω* *paschō*)ⁱⁱ. It is what we will *live* for; keep in mind that everyone is on the path towards death. Everyone dies, and then the judgment. Whatever we determine to “live for” with human passion is what we are actually “dying to do” with Christlike passion. We have only been given so much time on earth, and every moment is time indeed spent. How we spend our Kingdom commodities (time, talent, treasure, talk, and touch) is essential both now and in the eschaton. Grudem notes that Peter uses “passion” (*epithymia*) in a negative sense to denote human passion that is opposed to the will of God. “Humans must always strive to not let their lives be influenced by them.” There is human desire in opposition to the will of God that first appeared in Genesis 3:6. When tempted, Eve saw that the tree was desirable. There has been a battle from the beginning for human desire.

What we choose to do is often fueled by our passion (good or bad). What we live for is what we are genuinely dying for. “Not my will, but yours be done” is a declaration of understanding about which passion is of eternal value and worth. In Philippians 1:21, Paul states, “For me, to live is Christ and die is gain.” Paul’s declaration also comes from an eternal perspective: I cannot be killed; I am already dying, and if you take my body, I will simply enter my eternal place already prepared by God. The death of Jesus on the Cross is simultaneously Christ’s passion for suffering and joy.

There is a clear distinction between human actions according to fleshly desires (or passions) and the willingness to submit to God’s will, even if that means suffering. This contrast of action is driven by eternal versus temporal passion. A passion that is directed through the yielding of natural will in exchange for trust in the creator God (the one to whom glory is due) is how one emulates Christ. Suffering in the present is not merely with future hope, but also beneficial to the believer while living.

Paul states in II Corinthians 1:3-5:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

Suffering is something that will happen to all people, yet there is suffering that brings **glory** to God. Jesus demonstrated this great suffering and invited us to join him not as masochists but as a

way of extending **reciprocating** love. The story of the cross is called the **PASSION** of Jesus – translated from Latin; it means suffering. What one is **willing** to suffer for is ultimately their passion. Everyone is suffering, everyone gives glory to something, and each person has a fulcrum from which they balance **judgment**. Those who follow Jesus are not just struggling in their own power to deny their own will but have the **Spirit** of God and glory to whom we entrust our souls – the faithful creator.

We then are invited to take this third ring of covenant – the suffering – not as something to be avoided (as has become so common in Western thinking) and not as something to be pursued (as a way for individuals to pay their own way) but rather as something that we understand as common to humans. Everyone suffers, and nobody gets out of here alive – those who seek to save this life will lose it... but we may choose to live our lives with eternal purpose and direct our passion and suffering toward something with everlasting value. We live to love and glorify the Lord and to love one another.

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ⁱ G2123 ἐπιθυμία *epithymia*, n. [38] [√ 2093 + 2596]. desire, longing (in contexts where the desire is positive and proper); coveting, craving, lusting (in contexts where the desire is immoral and sinful):– desires (13), evil desires (8), lust (4), coveting (2), desire (2), passions (2), cravings (1), desire (1 [+2400]), eagerly desired (1 [+2121]), evil desire (1), longed for (1 [+3836, 6034]), longing (1), sinful desires (1)

ⁱⁱ G4248 πάσχω *paschō*, v. [42] [→ 2801, 2802, 3584, 3926, 4077, 4078, 4079, 4557, 4634, 5155, 5217, 5218, 5224]. to experience, suffer, endure (almost always in NT with reference to unpleasant experiences):– suffer (21), suffered (13), suffering (5), suffers (2), experienced (1)