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1 Peter 4

*“How To Live Until Jesus Comes” Part 4*

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Everyone suffers, but the degree and kind of suffering someone experiences may vary. Like everyone else, Christians are not immune to financial difficulties, marital problems, health issues, job crisis, death of a loved one, betrayal of a friend, etc. This type of suffering is related to living in a fallen world, and all of us are affected to one degree or another.

However, God will not allow suffering to exist forever. That’s why he sent Christ to die on a cross to rescue us from this fallen world. In the meantime, God tells us throughout Scripture that we’re to persevere through suffering until Jesus comes!

In this study we’ll learn about three specific types of suffering that we may or may not experience: 1. Suffering as Saints 2. Suffering for sin and 3. Suffering from Satan.

### Perseverance Through Suffering

1. Suffering as Saints
  - a. Peter refers to suffering 18 times in this letter.
  - b. **1 Peter 4:12-14** - *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”*

- c. The NIV uses the phrase, *“painful trial,”* and the KJV uses the phrase, *“fiery trial,”* which is probably a reference to Nero’s horrific practice of burning Christians to light his gardens at night.
- d. Tacitus,<sup>1</sup> who was a boy when Nero was emperor, wrote: “First, Nero had the self-admitted Christians arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers of others were condemned... Their deaths were made amusing. Dressed in wild animals’ skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be set on fire after dark as illumination... Despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man’s brutality rather than to the national interest.”<sup>2</sup>
- e. Christians in the United States are immune to the kind of suffering (torture, imprisonment, and death) that affects Christians around the world.
  - i. According to the World Evangelical Alliance, over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied fundamental human rights solely because of their faith.<sup>3</sup>
  - ii. According to a 2009 report in the International Bulletin of Missionary Research (Vol. 33, No.1: 32) it is estimated that approximately 176,000 Christians were martyred from mid-2008 to mid-2009 and, if current trends continue, it is estimated that by 2025, an average of 210,000 Christians will be martyred every year.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Suffering for Sin

- a. Peter distinguishes between suffering as a sinner (lawbreaker vs. 15) and suffering as a saint (Christian vs. 16).
- b. Peter is saying that since his readers were living during a time of persecution, they didn’t need to add to their suffering by breaking the law by being a murderer, thief, criminal, or interestingly, a meddler.
- c. His instruction reminds them that suffering for things like this is avoidable, because breaking God’s laws invites suffering, and sin has its consequences.
- d. Not all suffering is caused by sin, but all sin causes suffering to some degree.
- e. **Hebrews 12:6, 10-11** - *“... the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/T/TAC/tacitus-historian.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unrv.com/culture/christian-persecution.php>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.m-b-t.org/2010/03/25/how-many-christians-are-killed-for-their-faith-every-year/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.m-b-t.org/2010/03/25/how-many-christians-are-killed-for-their-faith-every-year/>

*painful. Later on, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."*

### 3. Suffering from Satan

- a. **1 Peter 5:8-9** - *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."*
- b. Satan is described as a lion on the hunt, which is a picture that illustrates the fact that he wants to destroy us.
- c. The Greek word for "devour," is *katapino*, which means to "drink down."
- d. The enemy of our souls desires to completely consume us!
- e. Peter affirms the fact that Satan is afflicting people everywhere when he says that the *"family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."*
- f. Satan is not omnipresent, so he can't be in all places at all times like God, however, he has dispatched demons (angels who rebelled with him) around the world to engage in his warfare.
- g. **Ephesians 6:10-12** - *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*
- h. **Ephesians 6:18** - *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."*
- i. Be alert and remember that Satan wants to take advantage of our weaknesses, exploit our fears and exaggerate lies.
- j. Satan is clever and crafty, as well as being a liar, accuser, deceiver, tempter and murderer.
- k. **Revelation 12:12** tells us that Satan *"is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short,"* so Christians must be *"self-controlled and alert,"* resisting him and *"standing firm in the faith."*
- l. **1 Peter 5:10-11** - *"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."*

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [1 Peter 4:12-19](#) and [1 Peter 5:8-11](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Review and discuss the statistics that demonstrate that outside of the United States, many people suffer all kinds of oppression, torture and even death because they are believers in Christ.
  - a. Use this link and go to 12:30 to listen to other examples Pastor Gary gave in his message. <http://www.cornerstonechapel.net/player/?i=570>
4. Do you think we're heading toward a time when Christians in the United States will suffer for their faith?
5. Allow time for people to share their experiences about times when they've "invited" suffering into their lives.
  - a. Read and discuss [Galatians 6:7-8](#).
6. Read and discuss [Hebrews 12:6, 10-11](#).
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about sin and suffering: "Not all suffering is caused by sin, but all sin causes suffering to some degree."
8. Read and discuss [1 Peter 5:8-9](#), focusing on the fact that Satan's intent is to completely destroy all Christians.
  - a. How are you doing in the area of being aware of spiritual warfare and the attacks of the enemy?
  - b. Read and discuss [Ephesians 6:10-12](#).
9. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember how easy they have it in the United States, at least for now, and never forget to pray for those who don't; remember to put on the full armor of God ([Ephesians 6:10-12](#)); remember to call on the Lord for protection from the enemy; and remember to pray for Christians around the world who suffer all kinds of torture and mistreatment for their faith.

Note: Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV).