

## Responding To Trouble, Part 1

*1 Peter 4:14-19*

**H**ow do you respond to trouble? That's a pretty fair question, since trouble is a part of life. None of us can somehow exempt ourselves from times of distress and concern. We are all aware that trouble comes in many different shapes, colors and sizes, and most of the time it gives no warning before it strikes. We do not have a choice as to whether or not trouble will come into our lives; the only choice we really have concerning trouble is how we will respond to it. I believe that those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ should respond to trouble in a manner which is different from that of those who do not know Him as Lord and Savior.

And that's the approach Peter took when he wrote his first letter in the New Testament. His first readers were facing trouble which came in the form of persecution for their faith in Christ, and Peter was trying to give them some resources for a time of severe trial.

We've already seen that there is one important response which must be factored into our reaction to trouble before the rest of Peter's words make sense. In chapter 4, verses 12-13, Peter told us that we are to *rejoice without surprise* whenever the trouble begins. He told them, "*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice....*"

But then Peter moved on into some other areas which should become part of the Christian's response to trouble. Today, we look at two other responses we should make as Christians, but as we move through them, don't make the mistake of seeing them as step one, step two, step three, and so forth. See them as elements of your character. See them as resources you can build into your life against the day of trouble. As you grow more and more in Christ, see them as part of who you are, so that when trouble comes, and it will, these responses will be as natural to you as breathing.

### **2 Praise God without shame, vv. 14-16**

Peter told his readers in verse 14, "*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*"

To understand the full force of what Peter was saying, we need to remember the concept the Jews in the Old Testament had about the glory of God. They called

it “*Shekinah*,” which is the Hebrew word for “that which dwells,” or simply, “dwelling.” It described the luminous glow of the very presence of God.

There are several instances in the book of Exodus in which the people of Israel saw the Shekinah glory of God. Just before God gave them the manna, the people of Israel were grumbling against Moses. Moses’ brother Aaron began to speak to the people, telling them that they were not grumbling against them, but against the Lord. Then the entire Israelite community “*looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud*” (Exodus 16:10).

When Moses met God on the mountain to receive the Law, the Scripture tells us that “*the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai.*” We learn also that “*to the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain*” (Exodus 24:16-17). Many years later, when King Solomon built the Temple, the priests brought the ark of the Lord’s covenant into the Holy of Holies. The Bible says, “*When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple*” (1 Kings 8:10-11).

And perhaps the best-known example of the glory of God is in the story of the angels appearing to the shepherds the night Christ was born. Have you heard this? It’s more familiar to us when we read it from the King James Version: “*And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid*” (Luke 2:9).

So Peter writes, “*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*” Think of that! Don’t miss the significance of what he is saying! Peter is saying that the very glory of God literally rests on that person who suffers for Christ.

A good example of that is to be found in the story of Stephen, who was stoned to death for his faithfulness to Christ. Those who were there that day described his face as looking like the face of an angel, because the glory of God had fallen upon him. In fact, the Bible tells us that Stephen, “*full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*” (Acts 6:15;7:55).

But when we dig a little deeper into the Scripture, we find another amazing fact. God can use the times of difficulty in our lives to cause us to grow stronger in Christ. That is especially true if we suffer because of Christ. The apostle Paul knew

what it was like to suffer for Christ, and he wrote the church in Corinth, *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”* (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Peter knew that sometimes we cause our own suffering. So he tells us in verse 15, *“If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.”* Peter gives several examples: murderer, thief, any other kind of criminal (which is a broad description of any moral failure which might occur), and meddler. If a Christian is guilty of those things, certainly he must suffer the consequences of his own sin.

But if the suffering and trouble comes as a result of obedience to Christ, the Christian then must make sure that his difficulty brings honor to God. Peter is making the argument that the way we live our lives should be enough testimony that we are not deserving of the suffering and trouble which has come upon us. But he also says, in verse 16, *“If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”*

Several years ago a friend shared with me something written by a man who had known the ups and downs of life. The night before he was to be killed for his faith in Christ, this young African pastor wrote these words in his room:

I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His and I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I'm done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, or first, or tops, or recognized, or praised, or rewarded. I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by Holy Spirit power.

My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my guide is reliable and my mission is clear.

I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice or hesitate in the presence of the adversary. I will not negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus. I must give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes. And when He does come for His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear!

The true disciple of Christ doesn't have to be ashamed when he suffers because he serves Christ. Paul put it this way: ***"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile"*** (Romans 1:16). When he was nearing his own death, Paul wrote, ***"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"*** (Philippians 1:20-21).

This was his testimony right up to his death, as he wrote Timothy, ***"And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day"*** (2 Timothy 1:11-12).

In our own day, it is becoming increasingly unpopular to be a Christian. It is important that we discover that one of the inherent responses we should have as followers of Christ when we are going through difficult times because of our faith is that we are not to be ashamed of the Gospel. We can serve Him, be faithful to Him, tell others about Him, sing about Him, live for Him—***and not be ashamed!***

### **3 Commit to the Creator without rebellion, v. 19**

Peter said in verse 19, ***"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator...."*** You might say, "That sounds pretty good. I wish I was like that. How can I reach that point where I can trust God, no matter what happens?" When every day brings some new challenge or some new threat to our lives as Christians, how can we actually follow through on what we are told in verse 19? Those are very good questions, because

the time might very well come when we will need to know how. Even right here in America.

Pay attention to the word Peter used for “commit.” It was a banking term, used to describe the action of one who makes a deposit of money. In those days there were really no banks as we know them today, and certainly no checks. Whenever someone went on a long journey, he had a two-fold problem. First, he had to carry with him all the money he would need while on the trip, and second, he had to figure out what to do with his money he left at home. It would have been too easy for someone to break in and steal what he left behind while he was gone. What one had to do in such a case was to find a true and faithful friend, with whom the money could be deposited. Because this was a universal problem, a trust like that was considered one of the most sacred aspects of the relationship between two friends.

The key to going through trouble and emerging on the other side of it without rebellion toward God, is to learn how to commit ourselves to the One who made us. If He made us, we can certainly trust Him to be faithful to guard what we have entrusted to Him. Paul said something very similar to this when he wrote his second letter to Timothy, and he used the same word Peter did in a verse we’ve already looked at. In the NIV, the word appears as “entrust”: “*Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have **entrusted** to him for that day*” (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul had made a deposit of faith in God as he journeyed through life, and that is the very thing we are to do.

It’s what Jesus did when He was hanging on the cross. Just before He died, He cried out, “*Father, into your hands I **commend** my spirit*” (Luke 23:46). Jesus had lived and walked so closely to the Father while He was here on the earth, that when Jesus came to the cross, and was hanging there dying for our sins, even then He knew that God was in control. We may not walk as closely to God as did Jesus, but it is still possible for us to commit our lives into the safekeeping of our Heavenly Father, the faithful Creator.

It isn’t true of everyone all the time, but usually when the average person spends the last dollar he has in his pocket, he doesn’t panic or get angry, nor is he plunged into a spell of paralyzing fear. Why is that? Because he knows that even though he may have run short at the moment, he has made a deposit at his bank. He has, according to the word Peter used, **committed** his money into the hands of the bank. Think of how rich he would be in a short while if he made a deposit every day!

Pay attention to this! Peter literally said that we are to be constantly committing ourselves to God. Every day we are to make a deposit into our account of faith. It is to become part of our lifestyles, part of our walk each day, part of who we are in Christ. So regardless of the form it takes, when the quagmire of trouble comes into our lives, and we run short on faith, we can relax, because we know that God has kept safe what we have already entrusted to Him.

We're told that it is a very frightening thing for a wild horse to feel a saddle on his back for the first time. Some horses react with anger. They rear back and kick and struggle to get away. Their nostrils flare, their eyeballs roll back, and panic takes over. But other horses are so afraid that they can't move. They just stand in one spot as though frozen, shaking and trembling like a leaf on a tree.

Many Christians are just like that. Take a good look at yourself. When something unpleasant or threatening appears, do you react with anger, lashing out at other people, even at God? Perhaps something has occurred which you cannot control or change, and you're so angry about it that you are determined someone is going to pay for your discomfort. You say, "God, You did this to me!" or you ask, "God, why did You let this happen?" Or do you react with such fear that you are essentially immobilized? You're afraid to step one way or the other, thinking that if you do anything you'll make a fatal mistake.

The mature Christian, the one who is constantly growing in Christ, can be compared to a horse which has learned to trust its trainer, and knows what the saddle is for. He knows that when the saddle of trouble and difficulty is suddenly thrust upon us, it is there for a purpose. That purpose may be known only to our Heavenly Father, but as long as He knows it, the mature Christian doesn't kick and rebel.

Listen to these words penned by someone unknown to me, but someone who had grown to the point in his life with Christ that he had learned to commit himself to God without rebellion:

*God is able to deliver  
From my weariness and pain,  
And He will deliver swiftly  
If it be for lasting gain;  
**But if not**—my heart shall sing  
Trusting wholly in my King.*

*God is able to supply me  
With abundance from His store,  
And He will supply my table  
Though the wolf be at the door;  
**But if not**—my heart shall rest  
In the thought, “He knoweth best.”*

*God is able to defend me  
From my foes who throng around,  
And He will defend me surely  
When their rage and hate abound;  
**But if not**—I’ll bless His name,  
And confess Him just the same.*

*God is able to save dear ones  
From the world and self and sin,  
And He will both save and keep them  
In His fold safe gathered in;  
**But if not**—He’ll hold my hand,  
Teaching me to understand.*

How do you respond when trouble comes into your life? How will you respond when your faith is put on trial?