

Depositing Your Life in the Bank of Heaven

Servival Kit, Part 8

1 Peter 4:19

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

As Peter wraps up how a Christian should act as the end of all things draws near, he reminds his audience of the overarching idea necessary to have in order to follow his advice. Entrusting all of yourself to the faithful Creator is the only way to be at peace and serve others as the fulfillment of all things is at hand. Enduring and persevering through suffering is difficult, but it is possible when you recognize the faithfulness of God through all things. He is sovereign and in control. If you are a child of His, He will bring you through and not let suffering destroy you but mold you more into the image of His son.

Discussion Points:

Peter is a realist. He knows that his audience is going to endure suffering and that it will only get worse as time goes on. Because of this, he is intent to make sure his audience knows that suffering is not unexpected or strange, but instead that it has a purpose. The “fiery trials” idea can give the imagery of either refining or destruction.

- What is the purpose of suffering in the life of a Christian?
- How does suffering help change a person?
- Are there other ways for a Christian to change other than suffering?
- What is the difference between the suffering of a Christian and the suffering of an unbeliever?
- How can you distinguish between suffering for the sake of Christ and dealing with the consequences of sin?

Peter delivers a shocking revelation for some in the first part of 1 Peter 4:19 regarding the God’s role in suffering.

- What does Peter say Christians suffer according to?
- How can the will of God include suffering for believers?
- Is it possible for God to cause a Christian to go through suffering without contradicting His attribute of love?
- Why would God will for a person to endure suffering?
- How does God’s sovereignty over even the suffering of His beloved affect the mindset of a Christian?

Discussion Guide cont.

God does not remove Christians from suffering because it is uncomfortable.

- How would you react to someone who says that God will only let you experience good things if you have enough faith?
- What is wrong with the doctrine of people who say God only wants us to bless us and prosper us on the earth?
- How can you make sure you have a proper, mature understanding of suffering in the life of a Christian?
- How can you help your children understand the presence and purpose of suffering?

Right after saying that God wills for Christians to go through suffering, Peter tells his audience that they need to entrust their souls to God.

- Why is it difficult to entrust your soul to God?
- How does Peter let his audience know that God is worthy of the entrusting of their souls?
- What thoughts and feelings does the phrase “faithful Creator” incite in the mind of the believer?
- How does knowing Scripture add to the believer’s understanding of God’s faithfulness?
- What things do you look for to bolster your confidence in God’s faithfulness?

Gospel Connection:

Christianity revolves around faith. There is a sin problem that all of mankind is forced to deal with. When we are born, we enter a sinful world and are already sinful beings. We are enemies of God because we desire to please ourselves rather than the Creator who should be praised. Faith comes into the picture when we admit our wrongdoing and our status as enemies of God. We have to entrust our lives to God’s keeping because only Jesus Christ can defeat the sin in our lives. Jesus is the only one who can pay the penalty for our sins and bring us redemption and relationship with God. We must have faith in Him to do all the work because we are not capable of it ourselves. And God has proven Himself to be faithful in all things so that when He promises that we will be saved and redeemed by the blood of Jesus and that we will make it through any difficult circumstances in life to be rewarded with life forever solely because of the work of Jesus, we can always trust in Him to make it happen.

Practical Implications:

- Think:** Are you holding back from trusting God completely? Are you trying to orchestrate your life in a way that you are in control? In what areas do you need to submit to Him?
- Pray:** Thank God for who He is. Thank Him for His unfailing faithfulness to you. Thank Him for His sovereignty and love for you that will use the suffering in your life to bring glory to Himself and make everything worth the pain in the end.
- Do:** Dive into Scripture and witness the faithfulness of God. Encourage others to do the same.

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R. C. Sproul, who went home to be with the Lord recently, wrote often on the subject of God's providence. I pulled one of his books off my shelf a few weeks ago and read it, as tribute to this author and professor who loved to write and speak about the sovereignty of God.

In this publication, he retold a humorous story he'd first heard from James Montgomery Boice, a pastor friend of his for many years.

It goes like this: There was a mountain climber who slipped on a ledge and was about to plummet thousands of feet to his death, but as he started to fall, he grabbed the branch of a tiny, scraggly tree that was growing out of a crack in the face of that sheer, rocky cliff.

As he clung to the branch, the roots of that scraggly tree began to pull loose, and the climber knew he was facing certain death. At that moment, he cried out to the heavens, "Is there anyone up there who can help me . . . is there anyone . . . anyone . . . anyone at all who can help me?"

Suddenly, to his total surprise, he heard a booming voice from the sky respond, "Yes. I am here and I will help you. "Thank you, thank you" the mountain climber said. The voice continued, "Let go of the branch – trust Me."

The man looked down into the abyss and he looked back up toward heaven and then said, "Is there anybody else up there who can help me?"ⁱ

Sproul went on to write that this mentality essentially typifies the mentality of our evangelical generation. We wouldn't mind hearing from God – as long as He delivers a message or a plan or a command that we like.

But if it involves trust, or faith, or hardship, or possible suffering, we often wonder if we heard the message right. Or maybe there's somebody else up there with a better one.

The Apostle Peter has been dealing with the reality of the Christian life. He has faced, head on, the subject of trusting God, even if it means difficulty and hardship.

Peter began this subject by informing us that we needed to prepare for the end of all things – that is, the coming of Christ for His church and the end of human history as we know it. But, he told us, we are to remain calm, stay involved, and keep pressing on for the glory of God.

And Peter has refused to pull any punches for end-time believers. Suffering and hardship and trust and faith are essential elements to pack into your backpack as you face the future. But Peter has also been encouraging us as well, to rethink suffering.

In fact, if you turn in your copy of the New Testament to *1 Peter 4*, we're going to pick up his final comments, before he changes the topic in chapter 5.

What I want to do today is point out 5 observations in rather rapid fashion. Some of it will be a refresher course, some of it will be nuanced with new emphases from the Apostle Peter's quill.

The first observation is this: **Suffering is tailor-made to strengthen your faith, not weaken your faith.**

Notice *verse 19* now, and just the first few words; ***Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God . . . (1 Peter 4:19a)***

Hold it there; did we hear that correctly? ***Those who suffer according to the will of God.***

- "I thought that suffering belonged to those who were *not* in the will of God."

- “I thought suffering could be alleviated if your faith was *stronger* or your walk with Christ was *steady*.”
- “Do you mean you can suffer and that happens to be the will of God for your life?”

Is anybody else up there?

But here’s the perspective Peter has already delivered to us: suffering is a tutor assigned by God’s Spirit that rests upon you and enables you to *develop* you and not to *destroy* you.

And now here he adds the secret behind it all – you are suffering *according to the will of God*. Which means trials are tailor-made . . . ⁱⁱ and the Tailor is God.

God literally suits us up with suffering according to the purposes and tailor-made designs of God.

Let me make a second observation: **Spiritual maturity is deepened through fiery trials.**

Peter wrote a few verses earlier on this subject and he told us: ***Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing. (1 Peter 4:12)***

The idea of testing here comes from the goldsmiths of Peter’s generation, processing and purifying gold – adding more fuel to the fire in order to remove impurities until they can see their reflection in the liquid gold.

Again, this analogy is intended to encourage the believers in Peter’s day, and in our day. The pressure is increasing, the culture is becoming more hostile. In a few years – open wide – state sponsored persecution will begin for these 1st century believers.

And Peter is informing them, and us, that God is the one controlling the heat and the length of time in the crucible and the amount of pressure.

It is God’s hand that is on the thermostat as He changes us and deepens us and conforms us a little bit more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Think of it this way: one author provoked my thinking when he wrote, “No one earns a diploma or degree without taking tests. The curriculum of Christlikeness is much the same. But the interesting thing about God’s schoolroom is that we get to grade our own tests.”

“He doesn’t test us so *He* can learn how much we’re changing, He tests us so that *we* can learn how much we’re changing.”ⁱⁱⁱ

What are the test results? And how different might they be from your unbelieving neighbor when he goes through hard times as well?

I mean, how different are we in our response to the evil and suffering of the world, from the response of unbelievers?

Just look at their response to suffering and evil and calamity – they curse God or reject Him because of it.

And they want to rule out the legitimacy of Christianity because of it! Their faith in God isn’t deepened, it’s eliminated.

Billy Graham, the internationally known evangelist who passed away recently – after, I might add, living a life of personal integrity absent in so many public figures – was once asked by a sceptic, “If Christianity is valid, why is there so much evil in the world?” Billy Graham, with simple, homespun wisdom and probably a smile on his face responded, “Well, with so much soap available in the world, why are there so many dirty people?”

What a good answer. By the way, in this letter, Peter never tells the believer how they can avoid suffering or pain or even evil inflicted upon them.

The difference between our response and the world around us is that we have a relationship as Christians with Christ. In fact, think of it this way: we happen to rejoice, don’t we, that we belong to a Savior who suffered for a reason.

He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. (Isaiah 53:5) Talk about suffering because of evil and at the same time being in the middle of the will of God the Father.

And because of it all, the Spirit of God has applied His suffering and His bloodshed and His death on the cross to our hearts and our lives – and we’ve been saved because of Him.

I love this next expression in the text; Peter actually gives us a key principle to this entire process of growing through suffering. Notice what Peter writes next in *verse 19*. **Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19)**

Here’s the key – **entrust your souls**. The word for *souls* refers to everything about you. Entrust your past and your present and your future; your disappointments and your successes; your highs and your lows; your questions and your doubts and your fears – entrust it all to Him.

What I especially love about this expression in the original language is the fact that Peter isn’t writing about a one-time action here.

The present tense Peter uses indicates this is a continual, daily action on our part.^{iv}

You could rather woodenly translate this phrase, ‘*Be constantly entrusting*’ your souls to a faithful Creator. * Which means that every day is a rededication of your life to Jesus Christ.

The word Peter uses here, translated **entrust** is a banking term. It means *to deposit for safekeeping*.^v To deposit your life to God for safekeeping.

Let me make three more quick observations:
This deposit isn’t periodical, it’s continual.

It’s day by day, sometimes hour by hour and minute by minute. Every day, you’re going to go down, by means of your spirit and mind, to the bank of God’s goodness and grace and sovereignty and purpose and providence and you’ll say to Him, “I want to make another deposit today. I know I was here yesterday or last night or a few hours ago, but I need to entrust to your safe-keeping of my life.”

“I tend to give it to you and then take something back. Here’s all of me, all over again.”

Peter isn’t talking about salvation – that’s a once and for all transaction. He’s talking about progression – and he’s writing this to Christians.

Secondly, **This deposit isn’t accidental; it’s intentional.**

This is an intentional exercise of trust and faith no matter what the storm conditions are like around you or even the winds of discouragement and doubt within you.

Even when the roots of that little tree you’re holding on to seems to be pulling away from the cliff where you are hanging on for dear life – and the message from God is, “Let go and trust Me.”

Thirdly, **This deposit isn’t partial; it’s total.**

The best way to deposit your life into the hands of God is to make an ongoing, nothing-held-back deposit. Don’t leave any loose change lying around; don’t hold back any of it for yourself.

I’ve read recently that the FDIC will insure in one account up to \$250,000. I’ve never had to test that insurance. Still, anything over that amount is uninsured and the government can’t guarantee it.

Listen, your infinite God has no limits to what He can guarantee. Millions upon millions of Christians can deposit themselves in His care and He will make every one of them good. He will hold every believer securely. He’ll never go bankrupt of compassion or power or grace and He’ll never say you, “Look, you can’t give me any more of you because I’m all filled up.”^{vi}

So make the deposit of your life, into the safe-keeping of your Savior – moment by moment and day by day.

And who better, to whom you can entrust your life?

Notice Peter's complete sentence; *Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (1 Peter 4:19)* Don't miss the fact that Peter doesn't commend us for being faithful; he simply reminds us that God is faithful.^{vii}

Peter doesn't say, "this guarantee of safe keeping is only going to work if you're faithful and you never slip up or let Him down." No, beloved, this is going to work because He is faithful and He never slips up and He'll never let you down.

Now, I'm not giving Christians the right to be unfaithful to God – don't misread me – but don't misread this text either. The emphasis here is on His faithfulness to you.

Ask **Joseph** in prison if the unfaithfulness of his brothers to God meant that somehow Joseph's life had slipped beyond the grasp of God.

Ask **David** if his sin meant that he would never write again the Spirit's words in songs of trust and hope.

Ask **Job** on the ash heap if his accusations of God's unfairness meant that the guarantee was off and he was on his own. In fact, ask **Job's wife** if her counsel to Job to abandon God meant that God would now abandon her.

Ask **Peter** if his denials of Christ meant that Jesus would deny him any future ministry fruit. Oh, wait, we're studying a letter written by an aged Peter whose ministry to this day is bearing fruit. Why? Because God is faithful to those who belong to Him.

And would you notice how Peter identifies God here – as a faithful **Creator**. This is the only place in the entire New Testament where God is called Creator.^{viii}

Throughout the New Testament, repeated in the Apostles' preaching, the very core of the gospel and biblical theology repeatedly refers to God's created universe; God's creative activity; God's 6-day creation. In fact, Paul even names Jesus Christ as the agent of the creation of the world and every creature on it. (*Colossians 1:15*)

But only here in this text is God the Father referred to as *the faithful Creator*. And what a perfect place to say it. As if to remind the church, if God is powerful enough to create and control the universe, He is powerful enough to create and control the events of our lives as well. Peter wants us to find solace and encouragement in the truth of our Creator God.

So did the prophet Isaiah centuries earlier. Imagine the comfort of his words as he writes,

*Lift up your eyes on high
and see who has created these stars,*

*The One who leads forth their host by number,
He calls them all by name;*

*Because of the greatness of His might
and the strength of His power,*

Not one of them is missing. Isaiah 40:26

As if to say, "if the Creator of trillions of stars never loses track of even one of them, He will not lose track of you either."

Not one of them is missing and not one of you is missing either.

Peter points us to consider the creation of God, especially when you're suffering.

Jesus Christ told his audience, in His sermon on the mount, to look at the birds and at the field flowers arrayed in beautiful colors. Then consider that this amazing, detailed, creative, brilliant, complex creation has a Creator who happens to be your God who crafted every detail in your life as well. (*Matthew 6*)

Since it's opening in 1874, the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, England has been the place where many incredible discoveries in physics have taken place.

In that laboratory, scientists discovered the electron and the neutron for the first time. The lab laid the foundation for the discovery of quantum mechanics in the 1920's. This was the laboratory that laid the groundwork which led to

the determination of the double-helix structure of the DNA, in the 1950's.

But what I found fascinating is that at the entrance to the old Cavendish lab, engraved above the great oak door, are the words from *Psalm 111* which read — ***Great are the works of the Lord; they are studied by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2***

The words were carved in Latin by the first science professor at Cavendish. One hundred years later, when the new lab opened in 1973, one of the professors requested that they inscribe the same text over the entrance again — only this time in English. And to everyone's surprise — and to the believing faculty's delight — that's exactly what happened.^{ix}

Great are the works of the Lord; they are studied by all who delight in them.

Peter is writing to suffering believers, and in a very practical sense, he reminds them that God is the Creator of all there is — as if to suggest that they take their eyes off their own suffering, and look around and ultimately praise Him for His creation.

Christians should be known, not by their suffering, but by their worship. Perhaps the best thing you can do when you're suffering or discouraged is study the creative handiwork of God.

- Visit the zoo; watch the monkeys for a while. Your life will soon look better and smell better too.
- Take a walk around a lake.
- Plant some flowers.
- Get near a window if you can and study the birds.
- If you're able, get outdoors as much as you can.
- Come over to my house and pull weeds — we'll *both* feel better!

I find it incredibly telling that after Job suffers months or perhaps years of incredible

pain and anguish and doubt and anger and despair and suffering — when God finally shows up, He does not deliver one answer. Instead, He takes Job on a tour of His creation.

- He describes Himself as the Creator of everything from lightning to ice and snow;
- He describes how He measured out the universe and created the earth, wrapping it with a garment of clouds;
- He describes for Job the constellations of Orion and Pleiades.

Job is then given a tour of the animal kingdom as God reveals His sovereign design over the

- ostrich and the deer and the lion and the stallion;
- the massive Leviathan and Behemoth;
- and even the ostrich and the donkey and the eagle.

No answers are given to Job for his suffering; only a trip to the zoo and a demonstration of God's sovereignty in creation. And when the tour is finished Job says to God, ***I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Job 42:2***

In other words, "You have a purpose in everything You do — even for me — and nothing can hinder any of it." And Job redeposited his life into the hands of His faithful Creator.

Peter began this section by writing, ***The end of all things is near*** — that is, Jesus Christ is on His way, so how will you prep for life?

How are you going to go through life as you wait for His coming — especially when it gets rough and wild and stormy?

I close with this more recent example of deepening trust and perspective. In an article I read recently, one author wrote of her experience traveling to Cleveland by airplane.

As she settled into her seat, she noticed a strange phenomenon. On one side of the airplane she could see a sunset that bathed the entire sky with glorious color. But out the

window on the other side of the plane, the one next to her seat, all she could see was a dark sky with threatening clouds and stormy wind – there was absolutely no sign of that glorious, beautiful sunset.

As the plane’s engines began to roar, the thought occurred to her that this plane ride was a lot like life. No matter which window she looked out of, her plane was still going to Cleveland.

- Beloved, the world and human history are going to reach its destination on time;
- The church is going to come to fulfillment and reach her destination on time;
- You and I, as the Bride of Christ and the children of God, are going to reach our destination on time.

In the meantime, remain calm, Peter commanded us;

- Stay focused,
- Keep praying,
- Keep rejoicing (which means – look out that sunset window with beautiful colors as much as you can),
- Keep investing in the lives of people,
- Keep serving in the Body with your speaking and serving gifts,
- Endure suffering well as you wear the name of Christ,
- And every day make a trip by faith to the bank of God’s grace and providence and deposit your life into the hands of your Faithful Creator.

And then keep on doing with is right – as you wait for your plane to land, not in Cleveland – not there – but in Heaven.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 02/25/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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i R. C. Sproul, *Does God Control Everything?* (Reformation Trust Publishing, 2012), p. 3
ii Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter* (Zondervan, 2010), p. 232
iii Charles R. Swindoll, *Hope Again* (Word Publishing, 1996), p. 204
iv Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Regency, 1976), p. 764
v Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Hopeful: 1 Peter* (David C Cook, 1982), p. 136
vi Adapted from Swindoll, p. 210
vii Adapted from Daniel M. Doriani, *1 Peter* (P&R Publishing, 2014), p. 199
viii Peter H. Davids, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Volume 4: 1 Peter* (Zondervan, 2002), p. 146
ix *From Laurence W. Veinott, "Psalm 111:2—Ponder God's Works"; (sermon manuscript)*