

Persevering in Personal Suffering

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[0 : 0 0] it is well with our souls because it is well in heaven i'm inviting you to turn to first peter as we continue verse by verse through this wonderful book peter has given us so many wonderful encouragements already very challenging the title of my message for this morning is persevering in personal suffering this continues to be the theme that peter wants to drive home to our hearts because this is the theme that he wanted to drive into the hearts of the people who were his original readers they're under persecution the government is ramping up the persecution against these people across the entire roman empire it hasn't become uh into law yet that these people would be persecuted nevertheless it's increasing and they're finding themselves in some dire straits some tough positions many of these people will be martyred for their faith history told us that so peter is writing to encourage them in light of all of this that's going on i want to share this with you as we try to put our minds around what's happening not only in the time that peter was facing as he wrote this to his original readers but what we're facing today let me share these few paragraphs with you in the way of a quote i'll tell you who said it later one of the pervasive marks of our times is emotional fragility i feel it as though it hung in the air we breathe we are easily hurt we pout and mope easily we break easily our marriages break easily our faith breaks easily our happiness breaks easily and our commitment to the church breaks easily we are easily disheartened and it seems we have little capacity for surviving and thriving in the face of criticism and opposition does that sound like our times we see very few models today whose lives spell out in flesh and blood the rugged words counted all joy my brothers when you fall into various trials james chapter 1 verse 3 when historians list the character traits of the last third of 20th century america commitment constancy tenacity endurance patience resolve and perseverance will not be on the list the list will begin with an all-consuming interest in self-esteem it will be followed by the subheadings of self-assertiveness self-enhancement self-realization we need help here when you are surrounded by a society of emotionally fragile quitters and when you see a good bit of this ethos in yourself you need to spend time with people whether dead or alive whose lives prove there is another way to live scripture says be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises hebrew 6 12 this was part of actually john piper's introduction at a pastor's conference 33 years ago in april of 1989 and it's where we live today one of the men in our study yesterday was making a point about something that we were discussing and in part of that he said gentlemen get ready because things are going to get worse for christians

and i believe that with all my heart because that's what scripture teaches this is preparedness for what's coming in many ways it's readying us for what we're already facing and if covid didn't open your eyes to what is about to happen around the world in a bigger way i don't know what else god could send to have your eyes open friends it is coming and this is not a message of doom and gloom i'm not a prophet but i read the scriptures and i teach the scriptures and the scriptures are clear that things are going to go bad from bad to worse in the last days living in the days after the cross and we are seeing like it was a portent of an earthquake the tremors that come beforehand or the portent of a volcano erupting when it starts belching smoke and you know stuff starts coming out and tremors that's exactly where we're living today more of it is on the way the apostle peter knew that personal suffering came with following the lord jesus christ so peter is one of these people from our quote who through faith and patience inherit the promises he's one of those people but peter doesn't point us to himself as an example of faithfulness and personal suffering he points us to jesus christ repeatedly he's doing that now peter himself was uh no foreigner to personal suffering he knew about that personally right it was it was a big deal for him he's eventually going to be martyred he's going to be one of these people he's predicting will die for christ and i sometimes read this and wonder did peter know did he realize that he was going to die for jesus christ as a martyr oftentimes it sounds to me like he talks like it paul talked like that let's read our passage together and see what peter has in mind for us we're in chapter four and we're going to look at verses one through six therefore since christ has suffered in the flesh arm yourselves also with the same purpose because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men but for the will of god for the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the gentiles having pursued a course of sensuality lust drunkenness carousing drinking parties abominable idolatries in all this they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation and they malign you but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead for the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead that though they are judged in the flesh as men they may live in the spirit according to the will of almighty god so the main idea from our passage today resonates with key points that peter's been giving us all along now for probably the past couple of months as we work verse by verse through chapter 3 and it's this the main idea we are to arm ourselves with christ's purpose of persevering in personal suffering jesus is our example of that not only in his crucifixion but throughout his life so beloved peter is calling us calling us to a certain mindset it's time for christians

to be sober he's saying it's time for you to be strong and courageous to keep the faith and to persevere in a willingness to suffer for what is doing right that's what he's telling them and so that carries over into our time today that we need to be sober minded courageous and willing willing to suffer on behalf of the lord jesus christ now some of us will think well yeah you know there's this big thing that will happen and then we'll step forward to suffering maybe we'll die for all that maybe but what about the suffering that you endure each day of your life as you deny yourself say no to sin and do what's right on behalf of others what about that kind of suffering that's much more real to my life than persecution from the public it's jeff suffering in a way that says jeff get behind me and let jesus come forward that's a lot more challenging for jeff every day than facing public criticism or malignment from other people i actually can take that a lot better than looking myself in the mirror and realizing i'm under conviction about something that was sinful in my life but that's where we live so peter is encouraging us to take heart and to take stock to be willing in a heart attitude to suffer for what is doing right and now we're going to expand on that the question comes how does peter help us persevere in personal suffering according to this passage he's already given us a number of things we can hold on to but what about this passage well he gives us three persevering perspectives is what i'm going to call them and they serve as our weapons spiritual weapons of the mind and heart in our fight to remain steadfastly faithful to jesus when we suffer for his sake because we've set our hearts to do what is right in his sight and that's all it takes for us to suffer beloved as christians is to set our hearts to do what is right and pleasing in the sight of god in a world that hates god and so we can expect that as we live for christ the world will not understand many people will not appreciate and value that stance that lifestyle even in gentleness even in humility and so they will persecute us they will malign us so one of the first perspectives that we'll deal with according to our text for this morning arm yourself for your present arm yourself for your present we're going to talk about what peter means by this he says in verses 1 and 2 therefore since christ christ has suffered in the flesh arm yourselves also with the same purpose because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live the rest of his life or the rest of the time in the flesh here on this earth no longer for the lusts of men which would include your own lusts but for the will of god now what does all of this involve the word therefore you know this connects this section with the previous one so that's where we have to begin particularly the idea from chapter 3 verse 18 which peter made a big deal of look at verse 18 in chapter 3 if we would for christ also died for sins once for all the just for the unjust

so that he might bring us to god having been put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit you notice the in the flesh in the flesh that's what we're dealing with we know that peter is making this connection with verse 18 of chapter 3 at least one way we know it because he's continuing his comparison to christ as he calls us to follow the lord that's what he begins with since christ also suffered in the flesh back to verse 18 of chapter 3 arm yourselves also with the same purpose so we're being drawn into this suffering with the lord jesus as a default for being a christian in other words beloved this is a normal occurrence this is a normal kind of working out of you being a christian the being is becoming the doing and in the doing people come back at you and now what do you need to do when that comes back at you this is what peter's concerned with he wants them to stay steadfast and he doesn't want them to be derailed when these things from the the general public the government or whoever comes back at them in the way of maligning them persecuting them perhaps putting them in jail and in many cases even putting them to death he doesn't want that any of that to pull them away from a steadfast faithfulness of being willing to suffer in doing what is right don't stop doing what's right because this kind of thing is happening set your heart to be willing to follow

Jesus and suffer even as Jesus suffered as your example in doing what is right even when people are not rewarding you but maybe even punishing you for it and stay the course beloved peter is hammering this and hammering this because of how this situation for these folks is ramping up and i'm saying this is the letter for our time because we are going to see things ramp up we are now how fast is it going to come in what form is it going to take i don't have all of the answers to those questions because i'm not a prophet i'm just a preacher of the truth i can't prophesy the truth but i want to preach it faithfully to you and this is what we're being called to now clearly beloved as you read this in your english versions arm yourself is is just clearly a military perspective on the issue of suffering and since jesus our lord and savior suffered in his life as he served god we also should arm ourselves with that same purpose christ had so we are we are being put in a in a perspective of being on a war footing this is a war footing and commensurate with that war footing comes a war mindset a war mentality you would never in a million years walk into a physical war zone a battle environment laws a fair weapon hanging down here at your hips just walking out in the middle of the road just waiting for somebody to take you out you wouldn't do that and if you're going to move into a combat zone or what they call the kill zone which is where we live as christians if you're going to move into that willingly as you follow christ and you must if you follow faithfully what did what did jesus say if they persecuted me so why do we expect anything less from the world than what they gave our savior and our lord if we continue to follow him we're going to get more of the same and so we keep following and we stay faithful and we understand we're being put on war footing here and that should affect the way that we think so this this beloved is what we're going to say this is a call to arms it's a call to war and it reflects our need to do two things to understand our times this is not a time to bury our heads or pretend like nothing's going on or just tell everybody that god is in control we know that we understand that we need to live it what does it look like for you and i to live god is in control when the whole world this seems to just be going upside down losing its mind and then to commit ourselves to knowing who we are and what we are about as followers of jesus christ now these emphases on our readiness for battle come forward to us in the word that translates purpose in the new american standard it reads this way therefore since christ has suffered in the flesh arm yourselves also with the same purpose i don't know what your translation says that's what mine says purpose arm yourselves with this same purpose it's variously translated as way of thinking mind understanding and attitude just to name a few of the trusted translations i consulted all right so the word

[18:00] the word for purpose can actually be defined as or have a meaning as thought knowledge or insight so it could read arm yourselves with this same insight arm yourselves with this same intention this same thought this same knowledge but it goes beyond just knowing something peter doesn't just want us to stop at knowing something like i would tell you all right everybody be encouraged go out there in the world and follow jesus and just know you're gonna suffer all right amen nope he doesn't stop there there's more because we need more we just do and i'm very grateful that god knows our frame and knows we're but dust and so we have a truth and a word that speaks to our hearts not just to our actions so that what we do is the motivation that we have in our heart for christ our devotion to the lord is born out in our actions and so that makes it acts of devotion it's not legalistic we own it it's part of who we are i have to do this because it's who jesus made me to be and i can do no other so martin luther said so the word for purpose again can mean thought knowledge or insight so when peter tells us to arm ourselves with this same purpose he's saying we need to have the same intention the same aim or the same objective that jesus had about personal suffering now what is that purpose of jesus that we need to adopt and begin to live out what is it here it is a willing and humble heart to suffer for the sake of what is right in the sight of god and that's in a daily basis in every situation whether you're dealing with your spouse or your kids or people outside of your family or whatever it is in your life that never switches off you know i have a willing and humble heart right this minute to follow the lord and doing what's right but let somebody get in my way or try to thwart my agenda and that's all out the window and i'm gonna do what i want to do nope for us for us this involves personal suffering in our fight for truth and against sin for the things that please god and against the things which prevent us from suffering well for doing what's right in god's sight another way of saying that is i'm willing to suffer well with a hard attitude that says i want to be humble about this and pursue this because i want to glorify god i don't want anything to derail me from glorifying the lord including being persecuted i don't want that to take me away from honoring the lord i don't want to start making it all about me because it's tough on me now i don't know about you what's your button what is it that happens in your life in everyday living that tests your metal in terms of your steadfastness to god in being willing to suffer for doing what's right i don't know i know what a couple of mine are we're being called to

move through those things and adopt the same purpose of jesus in them now i don't know about you but here's what i hear in this instruction i hear echoes of a crucified life do you remember we talked about that last time if you were here echoes of a crucified life that is the life of self-denial of a willing heart attitude to personally suffer the loss of all things for the sake of what is best for jesus i confess to my wife just i think it might have been yesterday just with just with tears just oh suzanne there's times in my life that i can think of where it hurts my heart to think that in pride or whatever it was expediency i made that moment more about jeff than about jesus and the people who were around suffered for that well this is what we want to deal with beloved this is what we want our hearts to break over we want to become more and more sensitive to sin and how sin robs jesus of the glory that we owe him as our savior and our lord and how sin robs the people around us of jesus ministering to them through our lives touching their life at a moment of need even when they're being mean toward us or harsh or hard or stubborn obstinate maybe even denying the lord and and and being uh militaristic about it you know can you stay the course of doing what's right in the sight of the lord considering all things loss in comparison to knowing jesus and following jesus and sharing in the sufferings of jesus paul understood this attitude he totally understood the apostle paul arming yourselves for suffering he powerfully spoke of this of his willingness to live the crucified life his savior sacrificed to give him and it's too much to put up here i just want you to turn there with me and see it in your own bibles philippians 3 is where paul speaks to this issue will you turn there with me hold your finger there in first peter and turn to philippians chapter 3 and i'll begin reading in verse 7 again i'm just i'm just asking you to see here the willing humble heart of the apostle paul to suffer all things for the cause of the lord jesus christ but whatever things were gained to me those things i have counted as loss for the sake of christ more than that i count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing christ jesus my lord for whom i have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that i may gain christ now folks that puts suffering in perspective paul's saying i've suffered a loss but what loss have i really suffered because that nothing all of that compared bundled up cannot compare to what it is for me to know the lord jesus and walk with him the treasure that he is to me all that other can't even compare now he goes on verse 9 i've suffered the loss of all things

count them but rubbish so that i may gain christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law but that which is through faith in christ the righteousness which comes from god on the basis of faith look now that i may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings there it is being conformed to his death in order that i may attain to the resurrection from the dead what's the hope that i may attain from the resurrection of the dead why didn't the scriptures say right there in order that i may escape the problem in order that i may get out from underneath the persecution in order that all people might think that i'm a great person that i have it all together that i know what i'm talking about that what i'm trying to tell them is important fill it in that people may appreciate me more no i am willing and honored and privileged to share in the fellowship of christ's sufferings being conformed even to his death in order that i may attain to the resurrection from the dead that's my goal that's my hope that's my highest calling and that's a mind and a heart that's not living in this world in terms of what the value the value is for life you live here but you understand the value's not here the value's there heaven and my calling here is to endure with joy and faithfulness to jesus that's what paul is telling us now back to first peter somewhat enigmatically all right enigmatic means puzzling or mysterious why didn't i just say that well enigmatic's a good word and i can't say i can say enigmatically i can't say and puzzlinglyly i can't say that i tried but in a somewhat puzzling way in a mysterious kind of way peter now adds this look at your text because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin now hands raised how many of you have ceased from sin and just never sin right so we know that's not what it means right simple we don't have to dive get into the greek dive into the greek to realize he is not saying that if you will personally suffer for jesus it's some kind of mysterious nugget that will keep you from ever sinning again on this earth nope it's not it well verse 2 helps a little bit so as to live the rest of the time on this earth the rest of the time you have to live the days you have left on this planet no longer for the lusts of men but for the will of god there's perspective there's aim there's devotion in that i think i think that helps us understand peter's meaning just a little bit suffering in the flesh in some some way obviously helps us be set apart to live the will of god you see that all of us who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin why so that we can live the rest of the time in our life not for the lusts of men and my own lusts but for the will of god now this comes back to the purpose we share with jesus

that which we're being told we need to commit ourselves to as we follow his example of suffering for living a life pleasing to god now i want please i want you to understand beloved we are being given this path of suffering with a goal with a purpose there's an end game and it's god's end game and there's nothing that we can do about that end game that's all in the hands of the lord as we walk that path in the will of god walking in the will of god trusting the will of god i'm just trying to say your personal suffering for doing what is right has a purpose it's going it's teleological it's going somewhere it's rooted in meaning and in purpose in the heart of almighty god it's fixed and the world can't rob you of that stay on the path stay steadfast stay the course and along the way as you suffer for doing what's right you're building treasure in heaven it's like making spiritual deposits into your bank account in heaven and then at the end you get to be taken to heaven and given the mansion and walk the streets a goal i mean look this is more than a win-win this is life transforming stuff this this gets your head out of the muck of this place and doesn't put it in the clouds it puts it in christ it puts your mind in christ it helps you see him as the treasure the treasure is me living for jesus and putting him forward that's the treasure everything else is just cake it's it's icing it's it's gravy what do you like i don't know it's lasagna jesus suffered in the flesh as he lived a holy life and as he died on the cross yes to suffer in the flesh is to live under persecution and even the threat of death and possibly even suffer death for the sake of pleasing god now some commentators wanted to limit this suffering in the flesh to just jesus being crucified on the cross i definitely think that that is true that that peter is speaking to the crucifixion of christ but i think the context lends itself to the thought the more general thought of the sufferings of jesus as he went through his life and then was ultimately crucified as he lived to please his father so i think it takes in the life and crucifixion of the lord and i think that context comes over more readily for us as well as hopefully none of us are going to be physically crucified now but we may be martyred that may be coming but right now we're living for christ and many of us as we go in our work a day world are being persecuted to some degree or another all right let me put this up here just to try to clean it up a little bit with you someone who has suffered in the flesh has adopted a willingness of heart for the purpose of suffering on behalf of jesus christ in doing what is right so this is paul's idea of the fellowship of his suffering i have been brought into a fellowship with jesus and a significant part of that fellowship with jesus is the fellowship or the sharing

in his suffering when i put jesus forward and when i live for truth and when i surrender my heart to humbly and willingly doing what is right in the sight of jesus to please jesus whatever it costs me in the moment i'm suffering in the flesh for the sake of christ that's that's straightforward now that resolve that resolve in your heart to live the crucified life of pleasing your savior and not not pleasing you in other words what pleases me is to please him so i get pleasure i get to be pleased because he's changed the desire of my heart from doing everything to make it about me to trying to do all that i can do to make it about him and so it's not like it's not like i'm saying all right i'll do this once again for jesus i just hope that he sees what i'm suffering there's a certain joy about the realization the reason the reason that i get to suffer for jesus is because jesus chose to suffer for me otherwise i just go through my life continuing to suffer but i'd suffer for doing wrong i'd suffer because i'm prideful egotistical selfish add to the list jesus rescued me from that from a life of dissipation and waste where oh i'm still suffering but i'm suffering for jeff not for jesus paul said one of those gets you death and one of those has an outcome of life you choose you choose jesus and get life you choose you and get death the first shall be last and the last shall be first he who loses his life will save it he who seeks to save his life will lose it that's the wisdom of heaven so resolve to please jesus because you're committed to jesus as your master and not to sin as your master again can we use and borrow on paul's wisdom here just to to come alongside of peter and say boy paul and peter you guys tag team on us this morning look at this paul's wisdom clarifies this heart attitude in this particular verse for us even so consider yourselves there it is you see resolve consider mark down plant your feet in consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to god in christ jesus therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its left do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness but present yourselves to god as those alive from the dead your members as instruments of righteousness to god for sin shall not be master over you for you are not under law but under grace so considering yourself dead to sin and presenting yourself to god for his use are resolutions of your heart based on god's truth about you as his child in christ jesus so this isn't gutting it out all right now this takes grit this kind of life takes some grit you've got to have some resolve some tenacity some perseverance some courage yes but you're striving in the grace of god to do what

[38 : 03] pleases god the power comes from the lord working through you say jeff how does that operate you resolve in your heart to do what is right in the sight of the lord because you've informed your conscience about what's right from scripture so you know how to step out this is the right thing in this moment and you step out in faith and you do it not in fear of consequences you do it in confidence that god is with you and that god holds and marks down that faithfulness in your life and you stand there whatever comes that's where you stand and so you're with paul you consider it all joy he's not saying that you ought to do a double dance because all of this nasty stuff's befalling you you ought to consider it joy in the attitude of your heart that you get to suffer for the sake of jesus which is a further proof that you belong to him and that should give you hope now the question is this in the moment is that enough because usually what we want is relief don't give me hope get me out of this thing but what if the lord leaves you in it so this spiritual reality about you being united to jesus it means that you're able to live the rest of your life how does he say it here so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh you're able to live the rest of your life no longer bound in the prison of selfish desires so that they rule your life but you can and must live to do god's will as his servant no i just appeal to you as your friend don't waste the life jesus sacrificed to give you make the most of your new life in jesus by being willing to suffer in your battle against personal sin and public persecution as i mentioned to you earlier my battle is much more in the realm of personal sin than it is in the public domain all right let's do number two real quickly here arm yourself against your past because that's where peter takes us next in verses four and five three four and five so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lust of men but for the will of god verse three for the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the gentiles that's what you used to live like you used to live like an unbeliever because you were having pursued a course of sensuality lust drunkenness carousing drinking parties now if you read that list and you say man i never did that no but you were a sinner you were an enemy of god you were lost you deserved the devil's hell whatever however however your sin manifested before christ it might have not been this list some of us can say that's me all right but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead the living and the dead so folks there are two considerations you need to make in this perspective about your past life of sin now i can't do all that i'd like to do here but i'll mention a few things that i hope will be helpful to you and then if god gives me breath for life i want to do more with this idea of putting your past in the past because man i deal with many people that they

have a hard time getting past their past and i understand that some of us have horrendous pasts where we sinned and we were sinned against i understand but let let this maybe hopefully bomb your heart a bit all right let's let's do this first one this first consideration of the two consider the poison of your past life without christ and consider the people of your past life without christ as to the poison as to the poison we have a really good question that's going to be asked of us here in romans 6 verse 21 regarding our past life what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed we are not supposed to live in the shame of what's happened in the past christ took care of that on the cross amen we are also not to live trying to remember or rehearse the failures of our past or the things that were done to us in our past people many people are just imprisoned by the wrong done to them from the past it could be the past of your childhood it could be the past of your young adulthood it could be the past six months ago but the past is the past isn't it if it's not today it's yesterday and it's done i'm not making light of the hurt that we experience in that i'm just telling you we need to put it in biblical perspective so paul says what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed that was poison to you now that you have the light of jesus and you're growing in the faith you can look back on those things that you knew deep down in your heart were wrong and you can say to yourself boy that all of that was getting me nothing but the outcome of death that was all death producing in my life and the people around me were negatively impacted see but then paul adds this for the outcome of those things is death and that's sobering because here's the thing i don't know about you i wasn't saved as a child so i can look back on my life and as a young adult man i can see my sin and i can realize that there were things that i loved there were things that i pursued on a regular basis and the things that i loved were actually the things that were bringing death to my life go figure i love the things that were killing me that's insane isn't it this is why scripture tells us that sin is insanity it's insane for us to live like this but apart from the light and the love of the lord jesus we pursue the very things that bring death to us we have friends like that we have family like that we have co-workers like that that's why they malign us we'll get to that in a minute let me just add a little bit more to you from the apostle paul here from romans chapter 6 he then moves into 7 and in chapter 7 romans 7 5 paul continues with this look for while we were in the flesh the sinful passions which we were were aroused by the law were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death i'm actually a fruit producer as an unbeliever and the fruit that i'm producing is rotten and if you eat it with me you'll die too but in 7 4 romans 7 4 paul declares therefore my brethren you also were made to die to

the law through the body of christ see who the treasure is here so that you might be joined to another to him who was raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit for god bear fruit for god you are joined to jesus in a spiritual union that brings life from death so that you might bear fruit for god now that's peter's point there's the reason i'm bringing all this to you that's peter's point as well that we can live the rest of our lives look at your text the rest of our lives for the will of god another way of saying that if you're the apostle paul is bearing fruit for god living in the will of god not in the will of jeff thank the lord i was delivered from that the lord i was delivered from that see you i wasn't delivered from the will of greg i was delivered from the will of jerry i was killing myself dead in my trespasses and sins joined to jesus now i was delivered from the will of god now friends living living for the will of god involves personal suffering for doing what is right and pleasing to god nothing nothing nothing about your past life can touch that privileged reality that leads to life now and for eternity what are you talking about putting the past in the past and realizing that you're not to go back into your past and reminisce about the good old days man i tell you what six months ago for me ain't the good old days i can think of things going on six months ago in my life whether it was or whatever in my and i'm thinking you know what the best day of my life is today because today i have breath for life to live with jesus i don't know if i have tomorrow i ain't looking back because i'm called to live today why well i can't do anything about that but i can live for christ today all right and that brings us to consideration number two the people don't let your past poison you in any way for any reason peter said don't live there don't keep don't put your mind there and then consideration number two this new supernatural spiritual reality about you is exactly why unsaved people in your past life and perhaps even in your present life cannot understand you they don't appreciate you or tolerate you and therefore they malign you why do they do that because they don't get you they don't understand this new life that has come to you in christ jesus you didn't understand it either i promise you you did not understand christians before you became one i didn't i've told you many times i thought christians were the biggest fools on the planet you guys are missing out on life why chasing something that doesn't even exist see that do you hear that's just pure sinful black pride in my life it's dark isn't it it's the dark darkness of my heart it's poison but that's the that's the meaning that we see here in all of this in all this verse four they are surprised when you don't run off with them to do the same excesses it may be people that you didn't know from your past it may be people now that are saying come on come on come on and you're saying you know i i can't i can't and so they malign you

remember i told you earlier in i think it was the first chapter of first peter many many romans looked at the christians of this day and labeled them haters of society you remember that and the reason they did that was because christians were constantly having to tell roman citizens the people around them in the general populace that they couldn't participate in all of these pagan rituals and festivals and celebrations and all the stuff that was going on they had to step back from that and so roman people in in general gentiles looked on christians and said you guys hate us you hate society you hate people party poopers and they they would round them up in many cases and kill them verse five but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead now folks that ought not to make us go like this nanny nanny nanny no that ought to break our hearts and terrify us for them and that ought to help us stay the course even more faithfully i will not allow you to make me your enemy you can consider me your enemy but i will not allow you to make me your enemy on my side romans 12 as far as it depends on me i will be at peace with all men that that's following christ that's fellowshiping in the suffering of jesus for the sake of others because that pleases the lord the call to war that we're called to isn't a war to go out and and and kill and beat up and you know whatever all these people who hate us as christians now another sermon is there a time for war yes i believe the bible teaches there's a time for war we have some warriors in our congregation and i thank god for them today's september 11th i thank god for the warriors who defended our country after we were attacked so this is not a sermon that's anti-war i just don't want you to take peter's counsel here as we're supposed to go out and make war on the people that we're supposed to be winning to jesus that's another sermon we don't want to let this persecution put us in a state of self-pity do we we don't want it to make us hold grudges or be judgmental or critical or cynical or unforgiving so that all the we talk about and define our lives by what happened to us what they did to us what we suffered under their hand look the world is full of unjust stuff these people need what you needed they need jesus to give them life and if jesus is living in you you need to let jesus come forward and minister to them and you have to get over you to do that that life of christ lives in you and they need to see him living in you as you display the same spirit jesus displays to you in grace grace all right and then finally and i'll just say a few things about this arm yourself with hope for your future that's verse six for the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead that though they are judged in the flesh as men they may live in the spirit according to the will of almighty god now this verse also seems a little bit obscure are the dead the people that have already gone either to heaven or hell what what is all that about in the context of peter's encouragements i think this verse beautifully reflects how the good news of life in jesus

provides us with a powerful perspective on personal suffering because here's what he says each person will one day physically die and then live again everybody not just christians everybody who dies lives again and they will give an account look at the verse they will give an account of his or her life to god the gospel of god saving grace in jesus christ gave courage and hope to the many saints who had already died under the suffering of this world that's what he means the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead those who have left us those who believed on christ and took hope in christ and who've moved on they they have moved on and graduated to glory that though they are judged in the flesh though they died because that's what sin does in this world all of us are going to die because of sin but notice what happens they may live in the spirit according to the will of god you see how according to the will of god in this passage is so key according to the will of god is is the hope in all of this i'm suffering according to the will of god i die according to the will of god i'm given life in the spirit according to the will of god nothing can thwart the will of god for my life god is sovereign after all god is in control after all that does matter and it makes the difference just to put a little finer point on it they suffered the judgment of all men because of sin they physically died because of the fallen nature of the world due to sin physical death is going to happen to each one of us one day ecclesiastes taught us that months back but though they died in this life in accord with the reality of sin the scripture says they live in the spirit according to the will of god we live in this world as believers according to the will of god and we physically die and then we live in the spirit for eternity according to the will of god so the reality for us is what jesus has won for us that's our reality it's not the reality i make for myself it's the reality jesus won for me on the cross that's that's my reality even if our suffering for christ's sake brings about our physical death like it did for jesus we will be raised in victory over suffering and death to live in the spirit so i don't mean to sound morbid or trite i mean to sound biblical when i say this so the worst thing that can happen to you as a christian is that you suffer for doing what is right even to the point of being killed and being killed ushers you into your eternal glory so far from being the end i remember i heard rc sprueil say one time and i'm paraphrasing him i don't fear death but i am worried about the pain of death i'm not looking forward to the pain that death might bring but i'm not afraid of death why because he knew death had to happen for him to take his final step into glory let me offer you one last little word here so arm yourselves for suffering and suffering well by adopting a mindset that is a hard attitude a tenacious resolve to live for jesus now to put off what you were before jesus

[58 : 12] and to look forward to your eternal future with jesus peter says those perspectives matter and they make the difference in us being able to steadfastly follow jesus in times of personal suffering let's pray together well father once again we are come to the place where we can give you the praise and the honor as we look back on sitting under the word of the living god to the degree that your servant jeff has brought to your people the truth of your word and the spirit of your word i pray that you will bless them help them to own it and be encouraged instructed by it that you will help them to persevere persevere for the sake of jesus in doing what is right pleasing you in all respects and we thank you for the word of the lord we thank you for the goodness of your heart toward us and we ask you to help us to live as your people as we put jesus forward in our lives each day as we come to understand more and more of what that looks like and what that means for each one of us help us to go out and be evangelists help us to go out and smile and bring joy and hope to a world that's coming off of this this covid thing with such fear and anxiety looking to the government and to everything else to try and deliver them when the only hope that they have is in christ and they don't even know it so help us to be a faithful people and help us to love you well by following well in jesus name we pray amen amen