

# Steadfast in Suffering - Part 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] In God's Gospel, that his kindness and love is proclaimed and remembered in this fallen world.

Just as Abraham was chosen with no mention of his worthiness to eventually become the patriarch of the Israelite nation and for the outworkings of God's covenant, so we too have the work of obedience set up for us to bring glory to God in the way we live as his elect in this very troubled fallen world.

And also even in the way we suffer. But more of that later. God has called you and me not because we are special or because we deserve privilege, for none of us will ever be worthy enough.

Because the reality is that left to our own devices, none of us would seek God. Sin has so robbed all of us of our free will that we will never remember God in our pleasures and often even in our sufferings.

Bob Dylan was a Nobel Peace Prize winner, rightly wrote in his song lyrics, I was blinded by the devil, born already ruined, stone cold dead as I stepped out of the womb.

[ 1 : 48 ] It is by his grace I have been touched, by his word I have been healed, by his hand I have been delivered, by his spirit I have been saved by the blood of the lamb.

We have been chosen, called by God's grace to manifest God's ways and character in the fallen world and to make a bit of heaven here on earth.

Just as the Israelites were called to live differently in the promised land, God's sovereign purpose is that you and I are chosen to live differently here and to live it to God's praise and glory.

And so election is not as a privilege, but it is for a purpose. Purpose of obedience to Jesus Christ.

And that brings us to the other word, exiles, strangers, or as the NASB terms it, aliens.

[ 2 : 55 ] Now recently my husband and I had, we made our first trip to Japan and we were quite amused upon arrival because we weren't, as we weren't citizens of Japan, when we arrived we had to join the longer immigration queue marked for aliens.

I certainly didn't think I looked like E.T. or some other alien, but the message was clear. I am an outsider. I'm not one of them.

Now the use of the word exiles or aliens or strangers by Peter is a clear reminder to the readers and to us of our temporary residency here in this world.

In fact, the English word exile indicates that we are being forced to live in another place that is not our home. So this life, this world, is not our true home.

We were not quite fit in here and really we should not make ourselves too at home here either. Our identity as elected aliens will or should mark us out distinctly and the world will have expectations of us because of our identity in Christ.

[ 4 : 14 ] How we live, how we behave and the world will also reject us as we maintain our alien exile identity. Now I went over to Australia to do my high school years in the 1980s.

You can quickly count my age now. My grandmother who had lived through the atrocities of wars and suffered under communist China was so afraid that the communists fighting in the Vietnam War would make their way down into the peninsula Malaysia.

She made my dad prepare an escape route just in case. And so my siblings and I were sent to Australia during our high school years while my parents remained in Australia.

Now, the white Australia policy was only finally abolished round about 1973. And Australia was not a very accepting environment of Asians back then.

Even very young boys would shout slurs like Ching Chong, Chinaman, Asians go home and other taunts like that from moving buses and as they cycled by.

[ 5 : 29 ] So there was rejection and there was some level of persecution in my high school days there. Of course, it's not the same Australia today. Sometimes you wonder whether when you're standing in Australia whether you're still in Southeast Asia.

There's so many Asians there now. But the very fact of our identity as God's elect, God's people, we should expect rejection in this world.

We should expect not to fit in. We should expect conflict. And we should expect suffering. Because we don't belong here. This is not our home.

We have a different world view. Our relationship with the world has been fundamentally changed by our identity as God's elect.

And the world will reject you. This reflects on the anti-Christian sentiments in many countries around the world. And it is not only other religions that particularly like to take pot shots at Christians, but so do communities like the LBGTQ, the pro-abortionists, and many in authority.

[ 6 : 40 ] In fact, in June this year, following the release of their annual survey report published by the UK government, Jeremy Hunt, the UK Foreign Secretary, highlighted the deeply disturbing scale of global Christian persecution that came out of the report.

Now, this is not a Christian report, okay? The denial of the right to freedom of religion or belief of Christian has become a matter of increasing international concern.

As we faithfully live out our election and identity, we will be alienated. And alienation in this world will have its pain.

You can say that 1 Peter is about the pain and sufferings of being an alien or exile in this world. The world will be hostile to you.

Well, it sounds very bleak, isn't it? What joy is there in being God's elect? You don't feel that special and privileged anymore.

[ 7 : 54 ] How are we to endure it all and get through our time here while we await our true home? Look with me at verse 3 in chapter 1.

Praise, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How can we carry on?

Peter tells us that there is joy and mercy. Although we now reside in the fallen world, we have already been born again into a new citizenship and we have an imperishable living hope.

On 4th August this year, news broke that a special needs girl, Irish girl by the name of Nora Ann, had gone missing from her room at the Seremban resort where she and her family were staying.

They had only arrived in Malaysia the day before for their family holiday. Now, Nora had a learning and developmental disability condition, which resulted in limited verbal communication and slowness and other special needs.

[ 9 : 37 ] The family strongly believed that she was abducted because Nora would never wander off on her own. According to the father, Nora would not even go out into their own garden without a family member holding her hand.

But yet, there were no signs of apparent foul play. The window in the room where Nora was sleeping was found open and that window could only be open from the inside and Nora's fingerprints were retrieved from the window pane.

What ensued was a massive search and rescue hunt involving the SAR unit, police officers, firefighters, sniffer dogs, divers to search the river, helicopters, drones, the local Orang Asli community, and volunteer hiking groups.

They even deployed a voice recording of Nora's mother calling out for Nora so that she would feel comforted if she hears and would respond.

For days, the family and those of us following the news closely hoped for a happy ending that she would be found. And as each day passed and as the search turned up negative, we all clung on to the nebulous hope that she would yet be found and found alive.

[ 11 : 01 ] That was, of course, until day 10, when Nora's body was found by a small stream, a mere 2.5 kilometers from the resort.

All hopes were dashed. Hopes not realized. Hopes died. In our normal everyday use of the word, hope is often an expression of wishfulness, our longings, our yearnings.

It is typically a desire for some future thing of which we are uncertain. I hope to do well in my final exams. I hope that that cute boy would ask me out for a date.

She is hoping to lose 5 kilograms before her wedding. The family hopes that he will be healed from cancer. Najib hoped to win GE 2018.

But that is not the way Peter or the rest of the New Testament thinks about hope. When Peter says that we have a new birth into a living hope, this Christian hope is certain, sure, and secure.

[ 12 : 20 ] Because this hope is a living hope that is established through the defeat of death by Jesus on the cross. We are already born into this hope.

A sure fact. Certain. Secured. Peter's own experience testifies to this hope. When Jesus died on the cross, Peter was emotionally a man without hope.

Full of bitter sorrow and regrets over his denial of Jesus. Lost. Directionless. After three exciting years following Jesus in his ministry.

Then Jesus appeared to Peter and eventually all the disciples and many more. And hope exploded into life.

A living hope. Grounded in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Friends, this is the foundation of our hope today too.

[ 13 : 33 ] By Jesus' resurrection and defeat of death, forgiveness of sins is established. The kingdom of God has dawned.

We can anticipate a new life and a new home. Our salvation is proven sure. Guaranteed. I started a new job a couple of months back.

And at this job, I was required to work alternate Saturdays. Now, I have not been in a job requiring me to work Saturdays for a very long time. So that was quite a shock to the system and our family's routine.

But thankfully, at the beginning of September, the CEO announced that with effect from October, the company would be operating on a five-day workweek basis.

So at the point of the announcement, we still had to drag ourselves into work on Saturdays till the end of September. But the fact of its finality, no more working on Saturdays starting October, was a sure and certain fact.

- [ 14 : 42 ] Thank God. It was a done deal. No turning back. The CEO has made the announcement. And it was so when it came to October. Our hope has been realized.
- We are now on a five-day workday week. And so it is also with our living hope, which we have been born into.
- Salvation is sure and guaranteed. We may not be enjoying it fully yet today. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is proof that death has been defeated.
- Done. The victory is won already. Death is dead. Kaput. We have a sure and living hope of a better world to come, where grief and pain and sufferings will be no more.
- We are not a people living in limbo with uncertainty. We aliens, exiles, already have a guaranteed home of our own.
- [ 15 : 58 ] A new citizenship. That's our inheritance. That's what we can look forward to. We have new birth into a world where the curse of sin is no more.
- Defeated forever. Nullified. Death. The one thing that everyone has to face and which the world greatly fears.
- It is nothing to believers of Christ. The curse of sin is powerless. It is a tiger without its teeth, a scorpion without its sting, a cobra without its venom.
- God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What's the worst thing that can happen to us now?
- What's the worst thing that they can do? Threaten me with heaven. That is all they can do. Our sure and certain inheritance will not perish, spoil or fade.
- [ 17 : 03 ] Verse 4. It is even shielded by God's power to the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last days. Verse 5. An inheritance of rest, where there will be no more tears, pain or shame.
- An end to violence, injustice, poverty, misery. A new heaven and a new earth. A sure and certain inheritance. A living hope.
- Now we know from verse 6 that the believers Peter was writing to were suffering griefs in all kinds of trials. In fact, the whole epistle of 1 Peter is littered with references to these trials and sufferings.
- You see this recurring emphasis in 1 Peter. Chapter 1 verse 6. Now for a little while, you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. Chapter 2 verse 12.
- You will be accused. Chapter 3 verse 16. They will speak maliciously against your good behavior and you will be slandered. Chapter 4 verse 4.
- [ 18 : 14 ] The world will heap abuse on you. Chapter 4 verse 14. You will be insulted because of the name of Christ. Chapter 2 verse 11.
- And your own sinful desires will wage war against your soul. But rejoice. This is the worst you'll ever get.
- There is discomfort, persecution, clashes, as they were in Peter's days. But just live with it until things are fully fixed.
- Our choices will not make sense in this world to the people around us. When I was in Australia, I cooked sambal belacan.
- My Aussie neighbor did not understand how I could enjoy something so smelly and pungent. But I'm a Malaysian. I like smelly sambal belacan. And let's not talk about durians.
- [ 19 : 12 ] Our identity has changed everything. Our taste for pleasure, our attitudes, our lifestyle. We have a different perspective. But this life here is temporal.

Our new identity and citizenship means separation, dislocation, misunderstanding, and even rejection from this world, which is not our true home.

But you do not need to suck up every drop of pleasure or satisfaction or fulfillment while you are here. There is no necessity to make the most of this world.

It will be nothing in comparison to the glory to come. You are free. Do not just suffer through grief in all kinds of trials, but to rejoice in these trials because you know that there is much more glorious inheritance awaiting you.

Yes, it hurts. And there is much senseless pain. But these are only temporary. Verse 6 to 7 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

[ 20 : 36 ] These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth and gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

It is only for a little while. Hang in there. 2 Corinthians 4, 16-18 Therefore, we do not lose heart.

Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. Since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

I'm going to end by reading from C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia, The Last Battle. This is the last book of the series, and right at the end of the book, and right at the final paragraph.

[ 22 : 03 ] I love this ending because it gives a God's eye view of the reality of our life here in this world before death, before Christ returns.

Aslan spoke softly. Aslan spoke softly. All of you are, as you used to call it in the shadow lands, dead.

The term is over. The holidays have begun. The dream is ended. This is the morning.

And as he spoke, he no longer looked to them like a lion. But the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them.

And for us, this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after.

[ 23 : 12 ] But for them, it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world, and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page.

Now at last, they were beginning chapter one of the great story which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, and in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Our life here is only the title and cover page. of our eternal life. So hang in there.

I'm just going to ask all of you to take a bit of time now, a couple of minutes, to look back through your notes, if you took notes, and just write down one or two things from God's Word that I've spoken to you this afternoon.

A reminder perhaps, or something new, an encouragement, a rebuke. Spend a bit of time reflecting through what you have heard from 1 Peter chapter 1.

[ 24 : 44 ] Jot down some of these things, just a few lines. Then after a while, turn to another person next to you in groups of no more than three.

Quickly share your points, and then pray for and with each other. Sharon will close in prayer after that. So now, I hope to answer that.

Thank you.