

Something Strange

7-3-22

1 Peter 4:12 (ESV)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the “fiery trial” when it comes upon you to “test” you, as though “something strange” were happening to you.

Note the words, “SOMETHING STRANGE!” Something strange like, “You are the most productive person in the company, and they need to reduce cost, so they release you.” Something strange inexplicable like, “You buy a dream home in the country and then Loudoun County designates property next to you for a land fill.” The point is that when Scripture says, “something strange” it truly means, “something strange”. Maybe you can relate to “something strange” that has already happened to you. We are warned so that we will not be surprised when “something strange” something foreign to the Christian experience happens. Notice that this “strange event” is described as a “fiery trial” that comes to “test” us.

This strange fiery trial is a refining test. The image of a refiner’s fire shows that the test is painful necessary to purify and strengthens us. With such knowledge, we will not be overwhelmed but will be encouraged.

1 Peter 4:13 (ESV)

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

In contrast to the usual response of sorrow and shock from such strange and fiery trials, we should rejoice because we share in the same trials Christ suffered.

Now that Jesus himself is no longer on earth in human form, Satan's spiritual onslaught falls upon Jesus' followers.

Although these trials are unusual and *strange*, they are a normal part of the Christian life. Don't be surprised! Jesus said, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18). God's good purpose behind any trial is HIS desire to enable us to grow stronger in faith and give glory to God. **Such fiery trials will be used to bring about Christ's full manifestation in our life which should fill us with joy.**

1 Peter 4:14 (ESV)

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God "rests" upon you.

The Spirit of glory and of God rests (reposes/relaxes) on believers who suffer in this way. **These persecutions and insults are proof that the Holy Spirit "rests" on us and we are being purified.** This also reveals a contrast between the storm raging around us and the peace enjoyed within our soul in the midst of the storm.

Now something really strange! As God purifies the individual, God also purifies the household of God as a whole.

1 Peter 4:17 (ESV)

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Gold is valuable but must be purified. The church is valuable, but also must be purified. The church as a whole, Christ's body, will be refined with Fiery Trials. The OT Prophets, said judgment will come first upon the people of God, Israel, (Ezek 9:6; Zech 13:7–9; Mal 3:1–5) before it would come upon the nations. **Judgment begins at the household of God before God brings HIS judgement upon the nations of the world.** The judgment at the household of God is not a punishment for our sins, which were laid on Jesus. **This judgement is to refine God's people!** No purifying process can ever be painless, but we can take heart from the knowledge that all that our suffering has an end, a goal. With the judgement at the household of God the chaff is being separated from the wheat and the remaining wheat can be depended on to serve God's intended purpose. Also, our judgement makes us realize that the judgement for non-believers is unimaginable.

1 Peter 4:18 (ESV)

And "If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Fiery trials will come. You and I are scarcely saved! However, the non-believers are fried! Therefore, as believers suffering something strange according to God's will, we entrust ourselves to God.

1 Peter 4:19 (ESV)

Therefore, let those "who suffer according to God's will" entrust **(put themselves alongside)** their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

When we “suffer according to God’s will” we must entrust our souls to our faithful Creator while doing good. Entrust literally means, “Put ourselves alongside.” God is doing something, and we need to put ourselves alongside HIM. Certainly, God may be accomplishing other goals, but HE is always drawing us closer to HIMSELF, and making us more like HIM. Our comfort lies in the knowledge that this suffering is only to purifying us and empower us.

When suffering according to God’s will, we know there is a limit to our suffering, both in its intensity and in its duration. A limit is set and maintained by the God who is our Creator. We know that we are not alone. We know we have the constant presence of the Holy Spirit resting upon us.

Trials = Power! With this faithful understanding, we joyfully continue in good works or actions which is a concrete sign of our faith that is the essence of being a Christian.

No matter what our strange fiery trial, we keep in mind:

1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst.