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**NT 504B Greek Exegesis II**

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**I Peter 4:12-19**

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### Verse 12

Ἀγαπητοί is a vocative used by Peter to address his readers and indicates his close relationship with them (*BAGD*, 6c) as his dear friends. It is also used in 2:11 where there is another major subject change.

μὴ ξενίζεσθε is a present imperative directed to his readers to “stop being astonished”. The implication is that the action was already occurring. It is understandable that the Gentile Christians of Asia Minor who were new at being the “people of God” might consider it strange and be surprised that they should have to suffer because of their religion.

τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει is a dative of cause. Normally a preposition takes the place of τῇ. (Turner, *Syntax*) Therefore, the phrase has the sense of “because of...”. πυρώσει has three possible meanings: 1) Exposure to the action of fire (as in cooking), 2) destruction by fire, and 3) the testing or purifying of metals by fire which can be used metaphorically to refer to the testing and purifying of people (Kelly, 184). Although Christians were burned alive at the stake in the persecution under Nero, such a literal meaning “cannot be taken for granted” here (Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 109). The metaphorical meaning is confirmed by the very next phrase and also by a parallel with 1:7.

πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν γινομένη is the phrase which Peter uses to define the definite purpose of the “fiery ordeal”. It was intended to test and purify them. This is contrasted with the rest of the verse which shows the perspective of the people who were suffering. Notice that πρὸς expresses the idea of purpose, “with a view to” (e.g. I Cor. 10:11) (Harris, *NIDNTT*, vol. 3, 1204). ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος points back to ξενίζεσθε and gives the reason why they were “astonished”. They were thinking of the persecution as a strange thing; “something that had no relation to their life in Christ” (Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 190). But suffering needs to be regarded as inherent in the Christian eschatological perspective (e.g. I Thess. 3:3-4, II Thess. 2:1-12) which was also foretold by Jesus (Mark 8:34-35, 13:9-13, John 15:18-16:4). (Borchert,

*The Conduct of Christians in the Face of the 'Fiery Ordeal'*, Review and Expositor, 1982, 451-462)

The present imperative and the two present participles are significant in that Peter seemed to view the persecution as an enduring situation rather than an unexpected crisis (Kelly, 185).

### **Verse 13**

ἀλλὰ is an adversative used to point out something that is directly contrary to that which precedes it (*BDF*, #447). Peter is about to tell his readers what the appropriate response to the “fiery ordeal” should be. Skipping a few words temporarily we discover that response: χαρῆτε (Rejoice!—present imperative) The proper response to suffering is not astonishment at its existence nor resentfulness but rather continuous rejoicing. Why is rejoicing the proper response? The answer is given in the rest of the verse.

χαρῆτε occurs 3 times in the NT. It is an adverb that means “in the measure in which” (Selwyn, 221) or “in so far as, to the degree that” (*BAGD*, 390d).

κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν is “share in the sufferings of Christ” There are a number of options to consider in seeking to understand this phrase: 1) “suffer as Christ suffered” i.e. in the same way or in the same things that he suffered (Huther, 321; Bigg, 176). But “share” seems to imply more that the imitation of Christ’s sufferings. 2) “share mystically in the sufferings of Christ” i.e. Christians, because they have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ and are members of his body participate in his suffering as they themselves suffer. (A similar idea is found in Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 190) But: a) It is doubtful that there are any parallels to this in Scripture, b) it is also doubtful that Peter had in view the concept of Christians being a part of Christ’s body here, and c) it is difficult to give a “mystical” meaning to “share” since it reappears in 5:1 with the sense of “partaker”. 3) “share in the Messianic woes” i.e. the birth pangs which denote a period of time of trial which the Jews believed would take place before the arrival of the Messiah. Out of these trials the New Age would be born. (Dan. 7:21ff, 12:1; Joel 2) Christians who obviously believed that the Messiah had already come and would return again transformed this idea of “Messianic woes” into a belief that they themselves would be involved in the birth pangs immediately prior to that return. (Mk

13:9ff, John 16:2, 4, 21, 22, 33) Option 3 is supported by a) the eschatological context of the letter (in that the “end” is viewed as coming shortly), b) Christ is articular therefore, the personal sufferings of the Messiah are probably not implied here (“Christ” is normally anarthrous when it refers to the person of Jesus, here it suggests the use of a title), and c) there are possible parallels to this idea in Paul (II Cor. 1:5, Phil. 3:10, Col. 1:24). (Best, *I Peter*, 162-163) In light of the reasons given in support of option 3 along with the eschatological stress of the rest of the verse I must agree with Best in choosing it as the probable intended meaning. The genitive would then be a genitive of reference.

ἵνα καὶ introduces a final or purpose clause. The “καὶ lays stress on the future in relation to the present.” (Huther, 321) The “present” on which the “future” is dependent can be one of two things: 1) the present “rejoicing” that was commanded, or 2) “sharing in the sufferings of Christ”. It seems best to side with Beare (*The First Epistle of Peter*, 191) over Huther (321) and go with option 2. As Beare says, “The share in the future glory of Christ is the promised counterpart of the sufferings that have been shared. It is not precisely a thought of reward, but rather of an inherent compensation.” (II Tim. 2:11-12)

ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι is the content of the purpose clause. ἐν seems to be serving as a temporal dative (*BDF*, #200): “at” the revelation of his glory. “Glory” is a subjective genitive here, while “his” is possessive. The idea is the “vivid expectation of Christ’s coming in power.” (Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 191) The last two words of this verse declare what the response of those who have suffered will be when Christ’s glory is revealed, namely, rejoicing with “rapture”! Stibbs says, “To share, therefore, in Christ’s sufferings here, is to be on the same road to a share in his consequent glory hereafter... the prospect of future rejoicing is a reason to rejoice now!”

## **Verse 14**

εἰ ὀνειδίξεσθε is a present condition of fact. Beare says that it is not truly conditional but rather is positive, i.e. “seeing that...”. This is possible and the meanings are not that far apart but Peter seems to setting forth a principle which he builds upon in the rest of the passage. Best says that the word “reproached” is a “fairly general term covering everything from verbal insult to

physical assault” but does not suggest official action. It is frequently used in the LXX (especially the Psalms) where it is used to refer to the reproach heaped upon God. It is used in the NT to refer to the indignities and maltreatment which Christ had to endure. (Matt. 27:44, Rom. 15:3, Heb. 11:26, 13:13) (Kelly, 186)

ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ is the only passage in the NT where this exact word combination occurs. (Bigg, 176) “for the name of Christ” does not necessarily mean that the profession of Christianity was an official crime (Best, 163) but it does not rule it out either. The phrase almost seems to be a technical expression in the apostolic church. (Mark 9:37 where it means “for my sake”.) It is an idiom which means “on account of” or “because of”. (Kelly, 186)

μακάριοι is a substantive adjective here. ἔστε is to be understood (i.e. You are blessed *now*). The first part of this verse seems to find an exact parallel in Matt. 5:11. It is a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ.

ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα begins with a causal ὅτι. That is **not** the only thing that is indisputable about this phrase! First, there is the problem with the “extra article”. There are two ways of dealing with the phrase. 1) The article associated with πνεῦμα was repeated for great emphasis. Thus, πνεῦμα would have to be understood with the first article. Bigg translates it, “the Spirit of glory, yes, the Spirit of God” and then says, “He is the Spirit who enables us to glorify God through suffering.” 2) Another word could be understood with the first τὸ. Some suggestions are “name”, “lustre”, and “presence”. Either way, the καὶ is exegetical. Huther says that τὸ τῆς δόξης may be circumlocution for ἡ δόξη. Not only is there no parallel for this in the NT, the question remains “why did Peter not simply write ἡ δόξη?” This argument also seems to apply to the other suggestions under option 2. However, Best and especially Selwyn put up a good argument for “presence” and therefore the “Shekinah”. They say that it fits the context well. Selwyn quotes other examples of this construction and attempts to show how the substantive that is to be understood can be determined from the context. He also tries to show how the apostles may have thought about the Holy Spirit in terms of the Shekinah. I think that this interpretation would be too much to ask of a Gentile Christian reading Peter’s letter. Robertson says that πνεῦμα is to be understood. The second article is probably due to the second genitive. They are used for emphasis. *BDF* says of this verse, “the coordinating of two ideas, one of which

is dependent on the other (hendiadys) serves in the NT to avoid a series of dependent genitives.” Either way, the Holy Spirit is the One who is referred to.

Second, there are two textual variants to deal with. 1) *καὶ δυναμῶς* is included after *δόξης*. Metzger says that the omission was given a B rating (even though it is suitable in the context and has support of a considerable number of witnesses some of which are early) because of the weight of the diversified witness without it and the fact that those with the addition do not all present it in the same form. Best and Kelly both think that it is possible that the omission is original. Beare says that the evidence in favor of its inclusion “seems too strong and too widely represented for us to reject it; it is equally hard to account for its loss if it is genuine, and for its insertion, if it is false.” (Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 192) This one is definitely perplexing but I cast my vote with the UBS text in favor of omitting it. The confusion revolving around the article problem may have been the impetus for many attempts at clarifying the meaning of the verse. This might explain the many different variants. 2) The second variant is more difficult than the first one. In the T.R. there is a long phrase that is included after *ἀναπαύεται*. The UBS gives the omission of it an A rating. And most of the commentators agree that it should be omitted as an explanatory gloss though it was probably early. Rodgers (*The Longer Reading of I Peter 4:14*, CBQ) however, argues for the inclusion of this longer reading. He has four main reasons: 1) It might have been dropped out by homoeoteleuton. (The preceding word ends with *εται*.) 2) The construction *κατὰ μὲν... κατὰ δέ...* is in line with Peter’s stylistic preference. (4:6, 3:18) 3) The language also conforms to Peter’s usage in the letter. (*βλασφημεῖν* and *δοξα*) 4) The longer reading properly incorporates an allusion to Is. 53:8. Peter was in the habit of citing OT texts more than once. (e.g. Is. 53, 8, Prov. 34) He already cited Is. 52:3 in an allusion in 1:18. These seem to be good arguments except that if it was included then the subject would have to be *πνεῦμα* which makes it hard to see how it fits into the context. Also, the external evidence weighs heavily against it.

*φ’ ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται* is accusative here to express the motion of the Holy Spirit, i.e. “comes to rest upon”. (Selwyn, 224) Peter seems to view the “presence of the Spirit as an occasional visitation, not as a constant dwelling in the heart of the believer.” Not that he disagrees with that just that he is not emphasizing it here. “The Spirit comes upon Christians in the time of their

suffering for the Name of Christ, accompanying this testimony of faith as He accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation by the prophets and the evangelists.” (Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 192)

## **Verse 15**

Peter now makes the distinction between suffering “justly” for the wrong that one might do and for suffering unjustly for simply being a Christian. Most of the commentators seem to think that some of the readers had actually been guilty of these sins except for Kelly and Beare. Although Christians from the first century were no doubt not all “saints” I agree with Kelly that that is not Peter’s point here. He is probably only interested in the last item; that may be why he separated it from the rest with another ὡς. The first two items are plain enough but the last two (especially the last one) cause a little more trouble. κακοποιὸς Tertullian and Cyprian translated it as “maleficus” in Latin which can have the connotation of “magician” or “sorcerer”. These words have been attractive to translators (e.g. NEB) because the first two words are specific. But there is no evidence that κακοποιὸς every had those meanings. Also, the Latin was only a “literal transposition.” (Kelly, 188) Therefore, the normal, general meaning is to be preferred. (i.e. “criminal”, “wrongdoer”, “malefactor”, etc.) The fourth word in this phrase (ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος) is an hapaxlegomenon. There are two ways to try to determine its meaning. 1) by etymology because a) Peter coined the word himself, or b) the word is just rare and so not found anywhere else. 2) by the example of how the word was used in the fourth century by Epiphanius. Possible meanings by way of option 1 are “agitator”, “revolutionary”, “spy”, or “informer”. Possible meanings using option 2 are “busybody”, “meddler”, or “mischief-maker”. If Peter did coin the word then there is more reason to think that we can discover the true meaning of the word through etymology. (It seems to follow the rules for such word formation.) But if he did not (and there is no way of knowing for sure) then we cannot be sure what the word means because words do not have to agree in use to their etymological meaning. I choose 2 “busybody” because that seems to fit the general meaning of one who interferes in the lives of others.

## Verse 16

Χριστιανός only occurs in the NT three times. (Here and in Acts 11:26, 26:28) The name was probably coined by the Gentile Antiochenes to refer to the people of God in Antioch. This does not imply that the term was meant divisively. (Grundmann, *TDNT*, vol. 9, 537) The Antiochenes probably needed a name for the group of people that they had learned to distinguish from the Jews. “By the time of Ignatius (of which more general use can also be seen in the letter by Pliny to Trajan) it had been completely accepted by the Church.” (Bigg, 179) ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ is translated by Selwyn by “by virtue of bearing this name,” i.e. the name of Christian. “By demonstrating under trial the true significance of this name, they will glorify God and teach others to glorify Him.” (Beare, 193)

## Verse 17

τοῦ ἄρξασθαι is an aorist passive infinitive with the typical genitive article. The aorist is significant in that it signifies a definite event in God’s dealings with the world. (Beare, 194) The “house of God” is the community of believers (2:5). The goal of this verse is not to be a warning to non believers but to be an encouragement the believers by assuring “them that the sufferings which they endure for Christ’s service, great as they are, still fall far short of what the enemies of the Gospel must await.” (Beare, 194)

## Verse 18

This verse is a quote from Pro. 11:31 (LXX). It is used by Peter to support what he said in the last verse. What is interesting is that the LXX text is very different from Hebrew text for this verse. The problem centers around the word μόλις (“scarcely”) in the LXX which apparently came from a word that means “in the land” in Hebrew! The problem might not seem as serious had not μόλις been the crucial word which is necessary for Peter’s argument. James Barr, in his article about this in the *Journal of Semitic Studies* makes this conclusion: “Although the word μόλις, seen individually, was a substantial semantic departure from the Hebrew text as we have it, in a wider sense the rendering was observant of the form and logic of the Hebrew sentence, and the sentiment which it produced was one deeply satisfying to Hellenistic Jewish feeling.”

## **Verse 19**

κτίστη only occurs this once in the NT. Peter uses the fact that God is the faithful Creator to show that He is worthy of being entrusted with their whole person (ψυχὰς) through the Messianic woes that are part of His plan for all believers. The passage ends with an exhortation to do good. This “diligent obedience in the midst of suffering is the sign of trust.” (Bigg, 182)

## Sermon Outline

- I. The Christian's response to suffering
  - A. Do not be surprised
    - 1. Its not strange
    - 2. It comes to purify and test you
  - B. Rejoice
    - 1. You are sharing in the sufferings of Christ
    - 2. You will be able to rejoice with "rapture"
- II. The Christian's empowering in suffering
  - A. You are blessed if you suffer for the sake of Christ
  - B. Why? Because the Holy Spirit empowers and anoints you
- III. The Christian's perspective in suffering
  - A. Do not bring just punishment on yourself
  - B. Suffering for being a Christian
    - 1. Do not be ashamed
    - 2. Glorify God instead
  - C. The final judgment has already started
    - 1. With God's people first
    - 2. The disobedient will be destroyed
  - D. To those who are suffering: Entrust yourself to God
    - 1. It is His plan that is being worked out
    - 2. He is our Faithful Creator