

1 Peter 4:12-19 NIV

“When Santa’s helper insults you”

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ⁽¹³⁾ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

“⁽¹⁴⁾ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ⁽¹⁵⁾ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

“⁽¹⁶⁾ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

⁽¹⁸⁾ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ⁽¹⁹⁾ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”

A lady named Josephine Baker commented:

“I like Frenchmen very much, because even when they insult you, they do it so nicely.”

Pic above: Bob giving his cousin a “horsey ride” when they were kids.

I wish Ms. Baker had given us an example of a good Frenchman kindly offending someone.

Today’s text deals with suffering insults, reproach, and reviling on behalf of Jesus.

Years ago I was playing racquetball with a former high school tennis coach and two burly Cherokee, IA policemen.

Those policemen are pleasant, honest, and considerate fellows.

One of the policemen brought his four-year-old daughter with him that day.

After one of the games, the little girl wanted her father’s friend, the other policeman, to give her a “horsey ride” on his shoulders.

After he carried her around a while, they came back to the area near us.

The tennis coach friend asked the little girl, “What’s your horsey’s name?”

“Princess!” she replied.

Recall that *horsey* was a burly policeman.

As the little girl sat innocently on his shoulders, that peace officer found his nickname mildly insulting, but laughed along with us.

That’s not the type of insult our text describes.

In today’s text, insult means:

**“To raise a complaint against someone”
or to be “disgraced for some cause.”**

**Peter specifically meant suffering that comes
from talking openly of your faith in Christ:**

“If you are insulted because of the name of
Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory
and of God rests on you.”

**Jesus blesses you when people: “falsely say all
kinds of evil against you because of” him.**

**When we suffer, though, “it should not be as a
murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal,
or even as a meddler.”**

**Few of us commit murder, thievery, or
criminal behavior.**

**Yet Peter mentioned *meddling*, a type of action
that often gives Christians trouble:**

- **The Greek term *Allotri-epi-skopos* translated *meddler* is a compound word.**
- ***Skopos* means “to see.”**
- **Add the prefix *epi*, which means “over” to *skopos* which means “to see” and you have an *overseer* or *administrator*.¹**
- **“*Allotri*” means other.**

¹ In the *New Testament* church, administrators-overseers were also known as elders or pastors. No church had a single elder-overseer-pastor. See Acts 20:17-35, Titus 1, and I Timothy 3, and 1 Peter 5.

- An “*Allotri-epi-skopos*” is someone who tries to oversee other people’s lives—a meddler.²

**The Bible says that if you are a meddler and
someone insults you, don’t complain.**

You deserve the insult.

**On the other hand, if someone insults you
because you are a Christian, be happy because
you are suffering on behalf of Jesus..**

**You don’t deserve that criticism because
Jesus is completely faithful.**

The Lord doesn’t fail us.

Dwight Pentecost wrote about a young man reared in a Christian home who wanted to help pay for his sophomore year in college. He worked the summer in a logging camp. He’d led a protected life.

Knowing that he’d led a sheltered life and realizing also the lifestyle of many loggers, the parents wanted to prepare him for persecution he would face. They didn’t hear from him much that summer so when he came home they questioned him about the attitudes of the loggers toward his Christian faith. He seemed amazed that they would ask.



² **Ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος**

“The one who meddles in things which do not concern him.”

“Why they didn’t even give me a bit of trouble all summer. In fact they never even found out that I was a Christian.”³

Do our friends and co-workers know that we strongly believe in Jesus?

When God, the Father sent Jesus to help us, he completely fulfilled his mission.

He endured pain, humiliation, and insults. Because he loves us, Jesus never faltered.

Throughout *1 Thessalonians*, Paul used an expression that once bothered me

Listen to athletes on post-game interviews and you’ll hear “you know” many times.

Paul used the expression “you know” three times in *1 Thessalonians* 2:1-11?

When people repeatedly say “You know” it often indicates they’re not sure of themselves.

That’s not why Paul used the phrase.

Paul knew that we insult people when we try to tell them what they already know.

So why did Paul repeatedly say “You know”? We need reminders of what we already know.



³ I think this was in *Design for Discipleship*, p - 69

Nearly every time I swing a golf club, I tell myself, “Bob, don’t hurry your backswing. Keep your eye on the ball. Follow through.”

When I get upset about the news, I have to lecture myself,

“Don’t be anxious. Trust God and do right. The Lord is in control and He punishes evil.”

Why did Paul remind Christians in Thessalonica of facts they already knew?

“You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.”⁴

I need to take the liberty of reminding you of something you probably already know.

At first, Paul harshly opposed Christians.

Yet Paul became an ardent believer in Christ.

His conversion took a while because he had so much momentum in the wrong direction.

- **Driving a farm tractor five mph, you can reverse your direction within 50 feet.**
- **Try that driving a sport’s car at 150 mph.**

On second thought, don’t try that either, but you get the idea.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 2: 1,2 NIV

Before Paul became a believer, he wanted to rid the world of all Christians.

He wanted Jesus’ Good News forever silenced.

Many first century people felt the same way.

But something changed Paul’s direction; redirected his fierce momentum.

Can we explain Paul’s change?

Paul saw Christian martyrs like Stephen die violent deaths, yet have forgiveness in their eyes.

Even though they faced execution, believers witnessed for Christ and his resurrection

Paul could drag people out of their homes.

He couldn’t drag Jesus from their hearts even while they faced death threats.

Moreover, the risen Jesus appeared to Paul.

Paul finally saw that the resurrection was a fact and that Christians weren’t mistaken.

Believers’ faith was genuine. Their love was real and their hope was based in reality.

Paul made a 180 degree turn.

But Paul’s former allies weren’t convinced.

Anti-Christian hate now focused on Paul.

Wherever Paul traveled and preached, folks tried to silence and stop him.

Paul didn’t try to go undercover.

In city after city, jealous, angry mobs tried to silence Paul and his co-workers Barnabas and Silas.

Enemies followed them from town to town stirring trouble.

Imagine helping people destined for disaster.

You doing that so upsets certain others, they form a mob and try to kill you.

The police come, strip all of your clothes off you, publicly beat you, and then toss you into a basement jail, with your hands and feet tied. No one formally charges you and you have no attorney.

In jail, you don’t threaten and don’t curse.

You simply pray and sing hymns.

- **The next day the town leaders come and say you can leave, but they don’t apologize.**
- **They just want you to leave town.**

You go to another town and begin preaching. Another mob forms there.⁵

Some folks do believe your message about Christ.

Believers realize you aren’t after their money.

You aren’t trying to take advantage of anyone.

You genuinely love God and them.

You have ugly wounds and welts from beatings, but you don’t seek revenge.

You risk more beatings by openly preaching Jesus.

You want people to believe in God’s love.



⁵ See Acts 16 and 17 for more details.

You're chief mission is getting folks to believe in Jesus and to love one another. People saw Jesus' love in Paul and Peter. They weren't after money. They didn't try to impress folks intellectually. They travelled Jesus' love trip, not power trips.

You know what God's love can accomplish. Years ago, Norma and I heard the Jewish philosopher-writer Elie Wiesel speak. Wiesel told an old Hasidic story of two friends. One was arrested and put in jail. When his friend heard about it, he went to the police saying, "I'm guilty." Both men pled guilty. The judge didn't know what to do because he had two men confessing to the crime. The judge brought the two men before him and said, "I've never seen love like this. I intend to let you both go free on one condition. I want to be included as a third in your friendship."

Jesus taught us believers to love like that. During one of the Civil War battles, a Union soldier named Joseph Dutton acted bravely. Under shot and shell, this Yankee crawled out into the night and dragged in a wounded soldier. Anxious hands and willing hearts took the burden from Dutton. A soldier flashed a lantern into the face of the wounded man and then drew back in amazement. His voice betrayed his feelings: "The joke's on you, Dutton," he said. "This man is a rebel."



"I knew it," Dutton returned calmly. "But don't let the uniform fool you, fellows. Underneath it there lies another human being."⁶

Jesus expects us to love as Dutton did. May I remind you of two facts about your life? Paul remembered that the risen Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus.

Do you recall the moment Jesus became real to you?

Paul realized that he should never be disobedient to the heavenly vision he saw. Neither should we ever allow friends, family, or enemies to interfere with our commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."⁷

When they come our way, I pray that we're ready to suffer insults from Santa or anyone else.

**Bob Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014**

www.robertblairbooks.com

⁶ *Kindness*, Lawrence Lovasik, p 179

⁷ Luke 6:22, 23 NIV

Above pic: Elie Wiesel