East 91st Street Christian Church | **Message Guide**

Refined	Can You Take the Heat? (Part 2)
November 1, 2026	Rick Grover
Week 4	1 Peter 4

In the world of metallurgy, heat is required to refine and purify a metal. With a little heat, you can break something down in order to build it back up, make it stronger, make it better. But for that to happen, the materials have to be able to take the heat. The heat changes the material, but it doesn't destroy it—unless it's the type of material that just burns up.

So, here's the question we started with last week, Can You Take the Heat?

Welcome to week four of our series, Refined, where we're looking at 1 & 2 Peter—letters written by Peter to Christians scattered throughout the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Peter's two letters speak to refining our lives like metal, so that we can be built back up again, stronger, better, pure, refined to follow Jesus.

We looked at 1 Peter 3 and discovered that being refined oftentimes comes through the heat of … suffering. Sometimes following Jesus means we will suffer because of the choices we make and the things we do. We do good, even though we suffer. And Peter's message in chapter 3 was pretty straightforward: Do good anyway.

But now, when we come to chapter 4, Peter takes us a step further, because there is another kind of suffering or refining for Christians. Sometimes you don't suffer because of something you do; sometimes you suffer simply because of what you believe and because you identify yourself with Jesus Christ.

1. **You may identify yourself with Christ personally, but when have you had the opportunity to show or tell others that you identify with Christ?**

You believe Jesus really is Lord. You believe the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. You believe salvation is found through Jesus Christ. You believe God has the right to define truth and morality and sexuality and holiness and what it means to live a good life. And eventually, if you hold those convictions consistently and graciously, there will be moments when those beliefs collide with the beliefs of the culture around you. That's when the temperature starts to rise. It's one thing to say, "I'm a Christian," when being a Christian doesn't cost you anything. It's another thing to say, "I'm a Christian," when people may reject you because of it.

So, once again, Peter asks us: Can you take the heat? Only this time the question isn't simply, "Will you keep doing what is right when doing right costs you?" The question is, Will you remain faithful to Jesus when belonging to Jesus costs you?

2. **If you belong to Jesus, when has that come at a cost to you and how did it affect your faithfulness to Jesus?**

To be refined means your life will look different. (Read 1 Peter 4:1–6.)

"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking..." (1 Peter 4:1, ESV).
"Arm yourselves." That's military language. Peter is telling Christians to prepare themselves mentally before the battle begins, because if we wait until the pressure comes to decide what we believe and how we're going to live, there's a good chance we'll compromise when the temperature rises.
We understand this principle in almost every other area of life. Athletes train before the competition. Soldiers prepare before the battle. Firefighters practice before the fire. You don't want the pilot of your airplane saying, "I've never actually practiced landing this thing, but when the time comes, I'm pretty sure I'll figure it out!"

Preparation matters. Prepare your mind now for the possibility that following Jesus may cost you something later. Because the One we're following suffered. Peter says, "Since therefore Christ suffered...." In other words, don't be surprised when following a crucified Savior involves sacrifice. Jesus never hid that from His followers. He never advertised Christianity as a pathway to an easier life. In fact, Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24, ESV)

3. **If following Jesus hasn't cost you yet, it likely will later. In what ways can you begin preparing yourself to remain faithful to Him when the time comes?**

Peter then explains what this new life looks like in verse 2. We are to live "no longer for human passions but for the will of God." Who gets to determine how you live? Do your desires determine how you live? Does popular opinion determine how you live? Do your friends determine how you live? Does whatever happen to be culturally acceptable at the moment determine how you live? Or does God determine how you live?

Peter says the person whose faith is being refined has settled that question: Jesus is Lord, and I want to live according to the will of God. Then Peter reminds these believers of the way many of them used to live. Verse 3 talks about "sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry." Apparently first-century Asia Minor wasn't nearly as different from twenty-first-century America as we might imagine! Peter's point isn't merely to provide a list of bad behavior, but that following Jesus produces a fundamental change of allegiance. These Christians used to live one way, but now they live differently because Jesus has changed them.

4. **How has your life changed now that your allegiance is to Jesus and not to the things of this world?**

Peter goes on to say in verse 4, "With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you" (1 Peter 4:4, ESV). Those who Peter writes to, used to go along with the ways of the world. They used to participate, but now they don't. They used to laugh at the same jokes, pursue the same pleasures, and organize their lives around the same priorities, but Jesus has changed them, and their old friends don't understand why.

Sometimes your changed life makes people uncomfortable, not because you're condemning them, but because your choices remind them that another way of living is possible. And here's an important distinction between chapters 3 and 4. In 1 Peter 3, you suffer because you do something righteous. In 1 Peter 4, you suffer because your allegiance now belong to

Jesus. That's one of the ways suffering refines us. It forces us to answer the question: Do I really want Jesus more than I want the approval of other people?

5. Has your new life in Christ made people you were close to uncomfortable? Someone says, "You used to do this with us. What's wrong with you now?" Or "You think you're better than everybody else?" Or "Why do you have to take your religion so seriously?"

To be refined means you have a change of priorities. (Read 1 Peter 4:7–11.)

Peter makes what initially seems like an abrupt transition in verse 7: "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers" (1 Peter 4:7, ESV). Peter isn't setting a date for the return of Jesus. He's saying that because of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, we are living in the final stage of God's redemptive plan. Jesus has come, Jesus has died for our sins, Jesus has risen from the dead, and Jesus will return.
So how should we live in the meantime? Peter doesn't say, "Build a bunker." He doesn't say, "Spend all your time trying to figure out the exact date Jesus will return." He doesn't say, "Withdraw from everybody who doesn't believe what you believe." He says: Pray. Love. Show hospitality. Serve. That's remarkably practical. Verse 8 says: "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8, ESV)

When the pressure outside the church increases, the love inside the church becomes even more important. Christians need one another, especially when following Jesus becomes difficult. And Peter knows that pressure can bring out some pretty unattractive things in us. Pressure exposes us. That's why Peter says, "Keep loving one another earnestly." Then he says: "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9, ESV).

6. Are you ever guilty of grumbling about a brother or sister in Christ? How might that add to the pressures to be faithful to Jesus in a sometimes-hostile world?

And then verse 10: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:10, ESV). Every Christian has received something from God that can be used to bless someone else. You may teach. You may encourage. You may lead. You may give. You may serve quietly behind the scenes where nobody notices what you're doing, but God has given every follower of Jesus something to contribute.

And why do we do it? Verse 11 tells us: "...in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11, ESV). Not that people see how impressive we are, but that people see how glorious Jesus is. Suffering has a way of refining our priorities by reminds us that life is short, eternity is real, people matter, and a lot of the things we spend enormous amounts of energy worrying about aren't going to matter very long.

To be refined means you can take the heat. (Read 1 Peter 4:12-19.)

We then come to the heart of the chapter: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you..." 1 Peter 4:12, ESV). What happens when the fire comes? Peter says it comes upon us to test us. Not because we're doing wrong (v. 15), but, Peter says, "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name" (1 Peter 4:16, ESV). The word Christian occurs only three times in the New Testament. It appears to have begun as a

label outsiders used for followers of Jesus—literally, “Christ people.” And Peter says: If you're going to suffer, make sure it's because people can see that you belong to Jesus. Don't be ashamed of that name. Don't hide that name. Don't apologize for that name. Even if it costs you. What does the fire do? The fire reveals whether our faith is merely convenient or whether Christ really is Lord.

Peter then gives a sobering reminder that judgment begins with the household of God. He's not saying Christians face condemnation. Rather, Peter is reminding us that God takes the holiness and purification of His people seriously. And then comes maybe the key verse in this entire chapter: “Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” (1 Peter 4:19, ESV)

Notice the three ideas: Suffer according to God's will. Entrust yourself to your faithful Creator. Keep doing good.

Peter doesn't promise you'll understand everything that's happening. He doesn't promise you'll know how everything turns out. He doesn't promise the heat will immediately disappear. He says: Trust God. And in the midst of suffering, that can be one of the hardest decisions we will ever make.

Corrie ten Boom, who suffered mercilessly in a concentration camp in WW II, said: “Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.” That's 1 Peter 4:19. You may not know what happens next, but you know the One who holds you. He made you. He knows you. He loves you. And He will not abandon you in the fire.

7. **What step will you take to deepen your trust in the One who will guide you through the refiner’s fire?**