

The Sting of The Enemy

The message centers on the biblical identity of believers, emphasizing that early followers of Jesus did not self-identify as 'Christian' but instead as disciples, witnesses, saints, and the body of Christ, terms that reflect a deeper, Spirit-led commitment. Drawing from Acts and 1 Peter 4, it teaches that suffering for Christ is not unusual or shameful but a shared participation in His glory, calling believers to rejoice in persecution as evidence of divine favor and the Spirit's presence. The teaching highlights how the term 'Christian' originated externally, as a label from the world, often used derisively, and contrasts it with the more meaningful, scripturally grounded identities that underscore a life of faith, obedience, and transformation. It further explores Paul's conversion not as a moment of guilt-driven conviction, but as a revelation of his role as an instrument of Satan, striking at Christ's heel, which led to a radical rethinking, rejection of his former life, and refocusing on God's gracious purpose through the One he was persecuting. The message culminates in a call to fellowship marked by continual renewal, surrender to God's will, and resistance to self-justification, warning against the danger of blessing oneself in the heart while walking according to one's own desires, and affirming that true blessing flows only from alignment with God's truth and grace in Christ Jesus.

The Sting of The Enemy

"It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." (Acts 26:14)

Main Truths

- 1 Peter 4:12–19
- Acts 9:1–19; Acts 26:12–18
- Genesis 3:15
- John 16:1–3
- 1 Timothy 1:12–16
- Deuteronomy 29:18–19 (supporting)

WHAT THE WORLD CALLS YOU WHEN YOU REALLY LOOK LIKE JESUS

Church, I want us to talk tonight about "The Sting of the Enemy."

Because the enemy has a way of striking—he has a way of stinging—he has a way of trying to offend, injure, discourage, and silence the people of God.

But I want you to hear me:

the sting is real... but it is not random.

And if you don't interpret the sting the right way, you will respond the wrong way.

Now listen—when you read the first century, biblically speaking, you'll notice something: the church didn't run around calling themselves "Christians" all the time.

They called themselves what the Scripture called them:

- the church
- the body of Christ
- disciples
- witnesses
- believers
- saints
- the brethren

And it was the outside world looking in that said, "That bunch belongs to Jesus," and they slapped a label on them: Christian.

And Peter uses that word the same way.

So tonight we're going to see something:

when the world can't deny your attachment to Jesus, the enemy will try to sting you because of it. And the Spirit of God will teach you how to carry that sting with joy, clarity, and courage.

1) DON'T CALL IT STRANGE—CALL IT SCRIPTURAL

1 Peter 4:12

Now open your Bible—1 Peter 4.

Look at verse 12.

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you..."

Peter says:

Stop acting like suffering is an interruption.

Stop treating persecution like a surprise.

Because if you treat it wrong, you're going to respond wrong.

And here's what happens—hear me, church:

- If you treat it wrong, you become defensive.
- If you get defensive, you become abrasive.
- And when you get abrasive, you stop reflecting Jesus, and you start protecting yourself.

And a defensive person is hard to approach.

And if we're not careful, we start blending in with the world around us—not because we love them, but because we're trying to avoid pain.

But Peter said: Don't think it strange.

Why?

Because Jesus already told you it was coming.

John 16:1–3

Jesus said,

“They will put you out of the synagogues... whoever kills you will think he offers God service.”

So persecution is not strange.

It is part of the path.

The enemy stings... but it's not new.

It's been happening since the Garden.

2) REJOICE—BECAUSE THE STING IDENTIFIES YOUR UNION WITH JESUS

1 Peter 4:13–14

Peter says in verse 13:

“But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings...”

And in verse 14:

“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God

rests upon you..."

Now church, that's wild right there.

Peter says:

the sting isn't proof God left you—sometimes the sting is proof God is resting on you.

They're blaspheming on their side, but on your side, God is being glorified.

Same moment. Same scene. Two realities.

- They curse.
- God gets glory.
- They mock.
- God manifests.
- They reject.
- Heaven rests on you.

That's why you can rejoice.

Not because pain feels good.

But because Jesus is being shown in you.

3) DON'T SUFFER LIKE THE WORLD SUFFERS

1 Peter 4:15–16

Peter says:

"Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a busybody..."

In other words:

Don't call consequences "persecution."

Don't call flesh "faithfulness."

But then he says:

"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed..."

Now here it is—this word Christian—used only a few times in the whole Bible.

And every time it shows up, it's connected to the outside world identifying you with Jesus, and the result is pressure.

So Peter's not saying, "This is what you should label yourself."

He's saying, "This is what they call you when you belong to Christ—and they don't like it."

And if that's where your suffering comes from—because you belong to Jesus—don't be ashamed.

Glorify God in that matter.

4) THE STING SHOWS YOU WHO'S BEHIND THE ATTACK

Acts 9 / Acts 26

Now let's go to Acts 9 and Acts 26.

Saul is breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.

Not against "Christians"—that word ain't even in the story yet.

He's hunting down anybody who belongs to the Way.

And then Jesus knocks him down.

"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

And Saul says, "Who are You, Lord?"

And Jesus says, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

And then that phrase:

"It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." (Acts 26:14)

Now here's where this teaching lands with power.

That word "hard"—it carries the idea of harsh, rough, offensive. It's offensive when done against someone.

And the word “pricks / goads” carries the idea of a sting—a sharp point—like the sting of a scorpion.

So Jesus is not merely saying, “Saul, you’re stubborn.”

He’s exposing something deeper:

“Saul, you are being used to strike at Me.”

Because when Saul strikes the church, he strikes the Head.

And I want you to see what this ties back to.

Genesis 3:15

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed... He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

Church, from the beginning:
the serpent is a heel-striker.

He cannot win—so he stings.
He cannot reign—so he injures.
He cannot conquer Christ—so he attacks Christ’s people.

So when Jesus tells Saul, “You’re kicking against the pricks,” it’s like Jesus is saying:

“You’re acting out the ancient war.”
“You’re being used in the serpent’s strategy—heel-striking.”

And when that light hit Saul, he realized:

“I’m not serving God. I’m being used against God.”

And he breaks:

“Lord, what do You want me to do?”

That’s repentance right there. After hearing, through conviction of the Spirit, Paul had a changed

way of thinking.

5) THE STING CAN BECOME THE TURNING POINT

1 Timothy 1:12–14

Now go to 1 Timothy 1.

Paul says:

"I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man... but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Paul doesn't describe himself as a man who was "sort of convicted but just kept resisting."

No—he said, "I was ignorant. I was in unbelief. I thought I was doing God service."

John 16 told us that would happen.

But then he says:

"The grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant..."

Meaning:

The sting didn't destroy his chances with Jesus —the revelation of the sting became the moment God exposed him and then saved him.

And you can't miss this:

One of the greatest adversaries became one of the greatest advocates—just like that.

That's what Jesus does.

6) HOW THE ENEMY USES THE STING AGAINST BELIEVERS TODAY

Now church, let's bring it home.

The enemy stings in a few predictable ways:

A) He stings your identity

He wants you to be ashamed of being attached to Jesus.

He stings your emotions

So you interpret persecution as rejection from God.

C) He stings your thinking

So you start treating the trial like it's "strange," and you get defensive and abrasive.

D) He stings your unity

So the body starts biting one another instead of blessing one another.

E) He stings your witness

So you stop being open and start being self-protective.

But Peter says:

Don't think it strange.

Rejoice.

Commit your soul to your faithful Creator.

Keep doing good.

7) A WARNING: DON'T LET THE STING TURN INTO BITTERNESS

Deuteronomy 29:18–19

Now I want to put a guardrail up.

Because suffering can either produce glory...
or it can produce gall.

Deuteronomy 29 warns about a root bearing bitterness and wormwood—poison and offense.

And then it says something terrifying:

A person can hear God's truth and still "bless himself in his heart" and say:
"I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my own heart."

That's the danger—people get stung, and instead of running to Jesus, they start self-blessing, self-justifying, self-protecting... and bitterness becomes their stability.

But that's not the disciple's life.

The disciple says:
"Lord, search me. Show me. Change me. Lead me."

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN THE STING COMES?

Let's land it.

When the sting comes, we do what Peter and Paul show us.

1) We rethink it in light of Scripture

"Don't think it strange."

2) We reject the lie the enemy is preaching

"I'm not abandoned. I'm not defeated. I'm not ashamed."

3) We refocus on Jesus and keep doing good

"Commit your soul to Him as to a faithful Creator."

And we say:

Lord, if You're glorified in this, I'll carry it.

If Your Spirit rests on me in this, I'll endure it.

If this sting makes me look more like Jesus, then let it sanctify me—not sour me.

"WHO ARE YOU, LORD?"

Now I want to ask you something tonight.

Some of us are suffering because we're faithful.
And some of us are suffering because we're stubborn.

Peter said: don't suffer like a murderer or an evildoer or a busybody.

But if you're suffering because you're attached to Jesus—rejoice.

And if the Spirit of God is shining light on you like He did Saul—then tonight is your night to say:

"Who are You, Lord?"
And hear Him say: "I am Jesus."

And then respond like Saul:

"Lord, what do You want me to do?"

That's repentance.
That's surrender.
That's salvation.

And for the believer—if you've gotten defensive, abrasive, bitter, or ashamed—tonight is a night to come back to the right mind:

"Lord, I won't think it strange.
I won't bless myself in my heart.
I won't follow the dictates of my own heart.
I will follow Jesus as a disciple, a witness, a saint, a believer—
and if they call me Christian as an insult, I'll wear it as a testimony—
because it means I belong to Him."

Father, we bless You tonight.
Thank You for Your Word that steadies us when the sting comes.
Teach us not to think it strange.
Keep us from defensiveness that turns into abrasiveness.
Keep us from bitterness that poisons the soul.

And let the Spirit of glory rest upon Your people—so we reflect Jesus in suffering, love our enemies, and keep doing good as You are glorified in us.

And Lord, if there's any Saul in this room tonight—any heart convinced it's right but living in unbelief—shine the light, speak the Word, and bring the surrender:

“What do You want me to do, Lord?”

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.