

Joy and Suffering - Part 1

I Peter 1:6-9

INTRODUCTION:

Many times we read of truths in the Bible that contradicts our earthly understanding. The next two messages from Peter present one of those paradoxes. It is a lesson on how we **will** have joy in our lives despite the suffering or negative circumstances that we face if we have a true relationship with Christ.

This is **so** foreign to our way of thinking! How can we have happiness when so many things in our life seems to be going wrong?

ILLUSTRATION:

As a Christian, we are often faced with personal or other persons situations that cause us to contemplate "**What am I supposed to think or say?**"

- What am I supposed to say when I am sitting in front of a couple who have just lost their daughter in a car accident?
- What am I supposed to say when someone tells me that their brother has just been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer?
- What am I supposed to say to a family who has just lost everything they own in a house fire?
- What am I supposed to think when my health has been taken away from me and I can no longer support myself or my family?

We often have to experience for ourselves or look into the eyes of other people to see the **reality** of pain and grief.

In our scripture this morning, Peter is telling us that we **will** face pain and grief in our lives and we must be prepared to suffer.

For those of you who are currently facing trials in your life I want to encourage and strengthen you from the truths from God's Word.

For those who appear to be at peace today with your current circumstances, I want to prepare you because it will not last forever.

In our scripture verses this morning, you will see two main themes: **Joy and Suffering**. As we approach these verses, we will spend most of this week's message focusing on the side of suffering. We are going to lay a foundation of the reality of suffering and what God is doing in and through suffering.

Next week we will focus on the source of JOY even amongst the most grievous of suffering.

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 1:6-9 (NASB)

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Before we look closely at these verses this morning, let's stand and bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

BODY:

I. The Reality of Suffering.

1 Peter 1:6 (NASB)

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

Peter tells us that it is "necessary" at times that we be "**distressed by various trials**".

Suffering is a very real occurrence in our lives. We will face events in our life that will cause us to grieve. Peter refers to our trials as a fiery ordeal.

1 Peter 1:7 (NASB)

⁷so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

When Peter wants to define the spiritual trials we go through, he chooses **fire**. It presents to us the reality of the intensity of the trials, grieving, and suffering that we experience. It is a **REAL BURNING PAIN!** Suffering is real.

We will face trials and we will grieve. And that is OK! The key to our grieving is to acknowledge that God is in control. Even Christ is recorded to have grieved.

We read of it in the story of the death of Lazarus.

John 11:33 (NASB)

³³When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,

Now think about that. Here is Mary and those who are with her weeping over the loss of their brother. Jesus didn't say, "What are you crying about?" Jesus knew that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead and He still didn't say "What are you crying about?" He saw their anguish and He groaned within Himself.

II. The Diversity of Suffering.

1 Peter 1:6 (NASB)

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

Peter tells us we will encounter "**various trials**". The Greek word for "various" literally means "multi-colored".

ILLUSTRATION:

When I work in Microsoft Word on the computer preparing my sermons, there is an icon that you can click for font colors. It has a color spectrum that you can choose to customize your color. By sliding the cursor over it, you can create nearly any color you desire by mixing the hues and the shades.

That is the idea that is being presented here. Our grief, trials, and sufferings come in so many forms that there is almost an infinite amount of things out there that can cause our grief.

I came up with four different categories that we could put them in.

1. Persecution.

1 Peter 3:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, ¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

I am reminded of Paul persecuting the Christians before he met Christ. We are told of the stoning of Stephen.

Acts 7:58 (NASB)

⁵⁸ When they had driven him (Stephen) out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

We are currently not experiencing that type of persecution in the United States. But it is still happening today in other parts of the world.

But we do face various types of persecution here in the states.

ILLUSTRATION:

Try believing the first three chapters of Genesis concerning creation and getting a job in Science or Higher Education.

Try believing what the Bible says about homosexuality, pre-marital sex, and abortion and run for political office and see if you don't find persecution.

There is another direction in which suffering often comes.

2. Financial Hardship.

One of the reasons Paul persecuted Christians was because it created financial hardship. If men were arrested, left behind wives and children who had no means to support themselves. Others were forced to flee, leaving everything they owned behind. They became Jews living outside of Jerusalem where no one liked them with no means of providing for themselves.

We have all experienced financial hardship at various times in our life.

A third direction from which our suffering can come is

3. The Physical Effects of the Curse.

We live in a sin-cursed world and so we face **diseases**. We face **pain**. We face **natural disasters**. We even face **death**.

- Many of you are suffering under the effects of our sin fallen world.
- Many people are facing or have faced the disease of cancer.
- Many of us are facing the pain that comes with age. It seems that day after day there is another injury of hurt.
- Others are either facing death themselves or they are facing the death of a loved one and the pain and grief they experience there.

There is a fourth direction from which our suffering can come.

4. Being Sinned Against.

It could be from the world mistreating us or doing us injustice or unfortunately it could come from people within the church.

I think of Joseph who was thrown into a pit and sold into slavery by his own brothers.

Some of you suffer under similar injustices today.

- Some are being abused physically, mentally, or otherwise.
- Some are in the hardship of having an unbelieving spouse.
- Some are having to work for a miserable boss and have to endure him or her.
- Some are being accused of crimes that they did not do.

These are all circumstances that occur in one's life that cause grief, pain, and suffering. The key to our grieving is to acknowledge that God is in control.

III. God's Sovereignty over Our Suffering.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB)

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Notice the words in verse 6, "**if necessary**" and the words starting in verse 7 "**so that**".

"IF NECESSARY" and "SO THAT".

If you are suffering or if you are going through a grievous trial, it is NECESSARY and there is something being accomplished.

Listen! If you are suffering today, God has ordained that suffering AND there is meaning in the suffering you are going through.

There are many well meaning Christians who seek to protect the reputation of God by removing from Him any responsibility of pain and suffering and place them at the feet of Satan.

I can almost hear Peter standing up and saying, "NO! NO! That is WRONG!"

Instead of protecting the reputation of God, it actually slanders Him.

Think about it! If I am suffering and it is not God's doing, it is all Satan, then God simply isn't powerful enough to stop Satan from inflicting my suffering or He simply doesn't care enough to do it.

It also does not offer any encouragement or comfort to those who are suffering. If God has no responsibility in your suffering and it is all Satan, then there is no good in it.

But, everything changes if you acknowledge that God is sovereign in your suffering.

ILLUSTRATION:

If I were to lose June in a car accident today. If I found out tomorrow that my daughter has cancer. If a tornado ripped through our house and destroyed everything. Don't tell me that God is not responsible for it because I know, as Ephesians tells us that God loves us like a son. And if that is true, then I can know that if He is responsible for this, then He also has a purpose for it. He is not blindly just letting me suffer. He is doing something valuable and I can look at it in HOPE, if He is in control of it.

Again, I am reminded of the story of Joseph. He was put into a pit and sold into slavery by his brothers. Despite being a slave, he advances very quickly, until he is wrongly accused. Because he did the right thing, he ended up back in prison.

Then we read Joseph's words to his brothers.

Genesis 45:5(NASB)

⁵Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, **for God sent me before you to preserve life.**

Genesis 50:20 (NASB)

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, **but God meant it for good** in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

Joseph acknowledged that he suffered and his brothers meant it for evil, but God was sovereign over it and He had a plan and a purpose for it.

If you are suffering this morning, know that God has ordained that suffering. And if God has ordained your suffering, then He was a reason and a purpose in it. There is meaning in your suffering.

We are also told that the reason for our suffering is to "prove" our faith.

1 Peter 1:7 (NASB)

⁷ so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

The fire is going to reveal the genuineness of our faith. Our faith is tested here like gold is. Only our faith is more valuable than gold. There is this metal called gold and it is worth a whole lot. We would not complain if we had a lot of it. But there is also a metal that looks like gold, but it has no value. It is fool's gold.

Just like gold, there is also a genuine faith that is even more valuable than gold. But there is this other thing, that on the surface looks like faith, but it is not faith and it is not worth anything.

James 2:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

We may claim to have faith, but if it does not hold up to the fiery testing of our faith, then it has no value.

It is the fiery testing of suffering that proves the genuineness of our faith!

CONCLUSION:

Jesus explained how to identify a genuine faith in His explanation of the soils in the Parable of the Sower.

Luke 8:11-15 (NASB)

¹¹ "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. ¹² Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

But there will be some who produce fruit and have a genuine faith. Here is what Jesus says of them...

¹⁵ But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

Peter tells us that it is the fiery trials of suffering that tests and proves the genuineness of our faith.

As a final scripture, turn with me to

James 1:2-4 (NASB)

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

We know from scripture that:

- We will all face many trials in our Christian life.
- We also know that God is in control of our suffering.
- We know that our suffering has a reason for it and a purpose in it.
- We know that our faith is tested by these trials and if we can pass these tests then we will have proved to have a genuine faith.

Next week we will examine how we can have true joy despite all of our trials.

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again, By His counsels guide uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you, God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet...Till we meet, Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet...Till we meet, God be with you till we meet again.