

A New People for an Old Message: A Study in 1 Peter, 4:12-19, Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on June 21st, 2009

Intro

Peter has been a book reminding us to rejoice in suffering because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we understand the gospel, and truly believe that God is redeeming His creation, and that one day every knee will bow before our Lord Jesus Christ, then we will know that we too will be raised in glory, and rule with Him as God intended when he created the world (See **Genesis 1-2**). In our passage today, Peter once again pleads with his people to see our “Fiery Trials” as an opportunity for rejoicing not despair. It is important not to confuse suffering as a result of sin or even physical anxiety which is a result of broken humanity. This passage is dealing with a suffering or persecution that comes naturally from our association with Jesus and His purposes in the world.

From the Head...

1. Identification with Jesus Brings Inevitable Suffering and Glory (1 Peter 4:12-18)

A. Suffering In Christ Is Inevitable (1 Peter 4:12)

We are reminded throughout the New Testament that suffering because of Jesus is a reality (See **Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29; 3:10; 2 Timothy 3:12**). Living out the gospel in real time inevitably puts us in situations that place us between our culture and the gospel. Those that separate from the culture have less encounter with the culture, and therefore less persecution, and those that syncretized with the culture are usually free from persecution since they are like the culture. When we truly engage our culture there will be moments we will be loved for our behavior and hated because of it. Persecution and suffering is truly a test to determine where our true idols are. What causes us to compromise our allegiance to Jesus? Whatever that is, is our god(s).

B. Suffering In Christ Is a Cause to Rejoice (1 Peter 4:13-16)

Rejoicing in our suffering can only come when we have a proper understanding of eternity. An understanding of the gospel reminds us that this world, in all its glory, is broken, sinful and full of suffering. But we can rejoice knowing that Christ has overcome the world (**John 16:33**), and in Him, we will have victory. When we endure with Christ and His sufferings for righteousness, we will also rejoice in His glory (**Romans 8:17**). Our passage commands us to rejoice for two reasons:

- We Share in His Past Grief (**1 Peter 4:13a, 14a, 16a**)
- We Share in His Future Glory (**1 Peter 4:13b, 14b, 16b**)

C. Suffering In Christ Is Not Equal To Suffering For Our Sin (1 Peter 4:15, 17-18)

Peter is clear that suffering because we are like the world is not suffering in Christ! He reminds the church that they are not immune to God’s judgment. As one commentator writes, *“When the privilege has been the greatest, the judgment has been the sternest.”* **Ezekiel 9:6** also reminds us of this same reality. Peter quotes **Proverbs 11:31** when he wants to remind us of the real, inevitable judgment of God.

2. Identification with Jesus Brings Inevitable Relief (1 Peter 4:19)

In the midst of our suffering, Peter tells his people two things that bring relief in the midst of our trial:

- “Entrust our souls” to God our “Faithful Creator”
- Continue to do good

...to the Heart

In our culture, suffering is simply not something that we care to engage in. We do everything we can to eradicate it from our lives. We live in a therapeutic culture that works toward the alleviation of suffering and not necessarily the mitigation of sin and the ultimate healing and transformation of the soul. The gospel addresses these issues and gets to the heart of the matter, yet it often leaves us at odds with conventional wisdom. While we shouldn’t look to suffer, living in truth often brings us toward suffering, but as a believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we realize that this suffering is inevitable, yet momentary in light of eternity!

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