

“The Joy Arising from Our Hope” Bible Studies for Life July 5, 2020

What are some things that bring great joy to you?

- grandchildren
- reading the Scripture
- your team wins a game or championship
- good music
- catching a fish
- a good steak, right off the grill
- helping another person
- a colorful garden
- a vacation

Some people view the Christian life as problem free. As Christians we turn our backs on our former way of life, and we embrace a new way of living for Christ. Our hope in Christ carries us through the difficult situations and causes us to rejoice and glory in Christ. As believers, we can experience joy in the midst of hardship.

Today’s Point: Suffering for Christ can deepen our walk with Him.

Listen for Peter’s view on suffering.

1 Peter 4:1-2 Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding, because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin. 2 In order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God’s will.

The believers in Asia Minor were faced with false accusations regarding their faith in Christ. Peter realized that they could possibly face physical persecution in the near future. He reminded them that Jesus was willing to suffer for them. Jesus suffered in the flesh. He suffered in His physical body during His crucifixion. Jesus submitted to the Father’s will.

Peter reminded his readers to arm themselves with the same understanding (attitude), and that they should be prepared. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we were freed from the guilt and slavery of sin. This does not mean that we will never sin again. The believer strives to live a life of faithfulness to God. It is important that we talk to Jesus and that we draw closer to Him. Read the scriptures and apply them to our lives. Search for what God is saying to us.

Jesus expects His disciples to dedicate their lives to God’s will and not to sinful human desires. He has set us apart to be His holy people. He calls on us to progress toward holiness and spiritual maturity.

What did Peter mean by the remaining time in the flesh?

He could have meant the time before Jesus’ return from heaven. He was probably referring to the time each believer had left before he or she died. Peter was calling on them to be faithful, to live good lives, and to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ – to live out God’s will.

Verse 3: Peter reminded his readers of their lives before they became Christians. They had engaged in sinful behavior.

Verse 5: He said that those who engage in such behavior (unbelievers) will be judged by God for their sinfulness.

Verse 6: The purpose of the gospel is to bring unbelievers to faith in Christ, so they will receive forgiveness for their sins so as to not face God's judgement and will live lives of holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 7 – 11: Peter reminded his audience that “the end of all things is near” and that their behavior should reflect this reality by being obedient to God.

Listen for how to respond to suffering.

1 Peter 4:12-14 (NIV) Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you, to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as 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.

Peter reminds his readers of their loving relationship with one another in Christ when he addresses them as “Dear friends.” He urged them not to be surprised by the suffering they were having to endure or to think that something unusual was happening to them.

Peter called suffering for their faith **the fiery ordeal**. God's purpose for allowing His people to go through trials was to test them of their genuineness of their faith. Suffering teaches us to depend on God. We learn that He is in control. As we trust God and depend on Him, others will see God at work in our lives. God's power is sufficient and He enables us to get through each situation.

Peter gives us two reasons that Christians should rejoice in suffering. It is a privilege to share in the sufferings of Christ, and we can rejoice with great joy when we meet Jesus face to face. Suffering means we are being faithful to Jesus and His calling to always live in a manner worthy of the gospel we have received. We can rejoice because it develops Christian character and leads to spiritual maturity. Think about that day when Jesus commends us and rewards us for our faithfulness and enduring suffering for Him. Our reward is great in Heaven.

Verbal abuse was the form of persecution Peter's readers were most likely facing. They should know that they would be blessed to be ridiculed for their faith in Jesus. The Spirit of glory and of God was resting on them. Glory refers to the power and majesty that belongs to God alone: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised that He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them. His promise was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples at Pentecost. The presence of the Holy Spirit within believers is the down payment on the inheritance all believers will receive when they are glorified with Christ. Through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, believers are enabled to endure persecution and remain faithful to Christ.

Listen for how to do good and trust God.

1 Peter 4:15-19 (NIV) 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 God's household; 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.

There are 4 types of sins mentioned in verse 15.

Murderer: May have meant those who retaliate against enemies who persecuted them.

Thief: May have meant those who steal because their persecutors made it difficult for them to make an honest living.

Evildoer: A general term for wrongdoing.

Meddler: One who spent time looking into others' business, a busybody.

While the believers would be blessed for suffering for the name of Christ, they should have understood that they would not receive a blessing for either doing or suffering the consequences for immoral deeds. Such suffering does not glorify God.

If believers suffer, it should be because they are a believer. Peter says Christians should feel no shame toward suffering, but should praise God that we bear the name of Christ. We should not be surprised to experience suffering because we live in the World, but not of the World. We should commit ourselves to the Lord, commit ourselves to the faithfulness of God and continue to do good and make right choices.

Peter said that God was going to purify us through our sufferings. The righteous person is the genuine believer who endures suffering for the sake of Christ. However, those who disobey the gospel of God and refuse to put their faith in Jesus will face God's final and eternal judgment. How bad would God's judgment be on those who disobey His gracious offer of salvation in Jesus Christ?

Verse 19 is a summary of Peter's letter. Peter stated that the Christian's suffering is according to God's will. God will not allow His children to suffer beyond what they are able to stand and will give them the strength to endure to the end. Believers can entrust themselves to God. The believers' eternal inheritance is kept safe by God for them in heaven. Because God is our faithful Creator, Christians can live with confident trust in and consistent obedience to God, even when it means suffering for being Christ's disciples.

Application

Rejoice.

- Choose gratitude instead of complaint.
- Voice a prayer of thanks to the Lord no matter what you are currently facing.
- Make a list of things that have brought you joy today, and allow that practice to set the tone for a lifestyle of rejoicing in Christ.

Memorize.

- To remind yourself to think with the mind of Christ, memorize 1 Peter 4:1-2:
- "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God."

Listen.

- Talk with other believers about their trials and suffering.
- Listen for the ways God has deepened their walk with Him because of what they have experienced.
- Offer prayer and encouragement as needed.