

Unit 1 – Theme: Living with Hope in a Broken World

Lesson 5 – THE JOY ARISING FROM OUR HOPE

Lesson Passages: 1 Peter 4:1-2; 12-19

The Question: What good can come from suffering?

The Point: Suffering for Christ can deepen our walk with Him.

Memory Verse: *“Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.”* (1 Peter 4:13)

Background: The theme throughout Peter’s first epistle was to encourage believers (Jews and Gentiles) scattered about in five provinces of Asia Minor and who were suffering persecution, to remain faithful to Jesus regardless of the cost. Peter reminded us (believers) of the blessings of our status in Christ (1 Peter 1:1-12; 2:4-10) and how we can maintain joy in the midst of sufferings because of our hope. We are called to maintain high standards of morality and holiness which is rewarded by God. This joy does not come from the world but it comes from our relationship with God. Just watch the news for a few minutes and if we’re not careful our hope will begin to fade as we watch and learn about so much devastation around us. However, in the midst of all this, we can still have joy. When we seriously consider the fact that our hope is in Christ, our attitudes will not be dependent upon our circumstances. Remember the song, “This joy that I have, the world didn’t give it to me, and the world can’t take it away.”

Lesson Outline:

I. When Suffering, Think Like Christ (1 Peter 4:1-2)

- ❖ After reminding believers of Jesus’ willingness to suffer for them, Peter challenged these believers to arm themselves with the same understanding (attitude). As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7a). We are to develop the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), which means having God’s laws written on our hearts and minds so we can remember to always obey God. (Psalm 119:11) Put on the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17a). Peter was encouraging these believers to be prepared for whatever situation they were and maybe faced with; even death.
- ❖ “In the Flesh” typically refers to the human sinful nature; however, here it refers to Jesus’ suffering in His physical body during His crucifixion because we know that Jesus was without sin! Christ became human and suffered as a human being. He understands what we are going through so we can always pray for help (Hebrews 4:15-16). In addition to being our Savior, He is also our example in how to deal with suffering. Jesus is our model for enduring suffering and not giving in to sin. Jesus said, “Nevertheless, not my will, but Thy will be done.” (Luke 22:42). Yielding to God’s will enables us to resist yielding to sin.
- ❖ When Peter said “finished with sin,” he did not mean that Christians would never sin again because all of us sin and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). What Peter meant was Christians should no longer sin as a lifestyle. (Galatians 5:1). Though we’re not perfect, we should be committed to pursuing God instead of chasing sin. When we confessed our faith in Jesus, we were baptized into Christ’s death and his resurrection which has given us newness of life. Sin shall not have dominion over us. (Romans 6:1-14). We are new creatures in Christ; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. (2 Cor. 5:17).
- ❖ In verses 3-11, Peter reminded believers that we weren’t always saved and unbelievers will be judged by God for their sinfulness. However, Christians have an opportunity to lead unbelievers to Christ by how we conduct ourselves but we must first, THINK like Christ.

Question: When suffering happens, is your mind consumed with the suffering or with Christ?

Spiritual Truth: God will keep you in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Him. (Isaiah 26:3)

II. When Suffering, Rejoice in Christ (1 Peter 4:12-14)

- ❖ Some people think that the Christian life will be easy. Since Christ is our example and servants are not greater than their master (John 13:15-16), those of us who follow Christ should expect to share in His suffering. Peter urged believers not to be surprised by their sufferings or think that something unusual was happening to them. God uses fiery ordeal (suffering) to purify (test) us, like fire purifies gold. (1 Peter 1:6-7). A test can serve two functions: (1) to reveal a person's knowledge or the quality of some material; and (2) to make the person or material better. Through a believer's suffering and faithful endurance, it demonstrates that our faith is real/genuine, strengthens our faith, and increases confidence of our authentic relationship with Jesus. (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2 Peter 1:3-11). Blessed assurance Jesus is mine!
- ❖ Instead of being surprised by our sufferings, Peter said believers should rejoice (1 Peter 1:6, 8-9) and gave two reasons why. The first reason, believers get to (a privilege) share in the sufferings of Christ and by enduring those trials, we develop Christian character which leads to spiritual maturity. (James 1:2-4). This shows the world what it means to live for Jesus in a manner worthy of the gospel. (Ephesians 4:1). The second reason, believers can rejoice with great joy when we meet Jesus face to face. As Jesus said to the disciples, "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12). If we can rejoice in the midst of suffering, imagine how much greater our joy will be when we reach our eternal reward. Like Paul, we can say "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18). Other references (Romans 8:28; 38-39; 2 Cor. 12:10; Habakkuk 3:17-18; Romans 12:12; Hebrews 10:23)
- ❖ At times we may be ridiculed for our faith. It happened in Peter's day, and it continues to happen today. Even this can bring us joy, because the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives. When the apostles were arrested and beaten for telling others about Jesus, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41). It is not easy to rejoice during hard times; however, we can learn how to rejoice by accepting God's will and depending on the hope God provides when we experience it. Jesus said, "In the world, you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). Peter encouraged that faithful believers would be blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God was resting on them. Glory refers to the power and majesty which belongs to and is always associated with God the Father (Ephesians 1:17), God the Son (John 1:14), and God the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:8). "And lo, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20b).

Question: Can you recognize a time when God took your suffering and turned it into good? If so, REJOICE!

Spiritual Truth: Suffering is a part of living out your faith. Count it all joy!

III. When Suffering, Give Glory to God (1 Peter 4:15-19)

- ❖ All suffering is not created equal. Some persecution/suffering is unjust, while some face the consequences of poor choices. Peter wanted to make sure believers knew the difference. Peter might have been thinking about how (Pre-Pentecost Peter) cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. We have a saying that "desperate times call for desperate measures." Peter cited four types of people that believers should not be characterized by: a murderer (killing), a thief (stealing), an evildoer (wrong doing), or a meddler (meddling in others' business). Peter did not want the believer's sufferings to overtake them to a point that they revert back to their old natures. This was unacceptable and such suffering does not glorify God and only serves to tear down the testimony of believers and the kingdom work of His Church. In contrast, Christians whose suffering is only for righteousness' sake have no reason to feel ashamed.

- ❖ When he spoke of judgment beginning in God's house, Peter did not mean that God plans to punish Christians. God uses suffering to make us better to purify us. Peter noted that endurance allows a believer to be saved with difficulty because suffering is not easy. However, those who disobey the gospel and refuse to put their faith in Jesus will face God's final judgment. If God's judgment of His faithful believers was difficult due to the suffering they experienced, His judgment on those who reject Him will be even more severe.
- ❖ Peter emphasized again that the Christian's suffering is according to God's will. God will not allow His children to suffer beyond what we are able to stand and will give us the strength to endure to the end. (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Peter 1:5; John 10:28-30; 1 John 4:4; Romans 5:3-4). God allows our suffering for a purpose. Because this is true, we never have to walk through suffering alone. God is faithful, so we can entrust our lives to God. As we endure, we allow God to deepen our walk with Him; making us more like Jesus.
- ❖ Our eternal inheritance is kept safe by God in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4; James 1:12). Because God is our loving, sovereign, and faithful Creator, Christians can live with confident trust in and consistent obedience to God, even when it means suffering for His name. Suffering does not change that. If anything, it provides us/believers a greater witness to those who don't know Him.

Question: When have you suffered for what's right? What was your response to God and others?

Spiritual Truth: Suffering is real but God is bigger than our pain. To God be the Glory!