

Helps from 1st Peter

Practical Principles Regarding Suffering

Text – 1st Peter 1:1 - 9

Congregational Reading – 1st Peter 1:6 - 9

A special message for the Corona Virus Crisis America is facing.

Pray for each other.

Pray for the people in our church that are working in health care. (Joe R, Anne, Joanna, Sara, Kim)

Pray for people who are currently sick.

Pray for the small children and the parents of small children who have to figure out ways to keep busy through this time.

Pray especially for the people in our church who are at high risk. They have health issues, which would make it particularly dangerous for them to get this virus.

Pray for lost people to be saved, and for saved people to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ during this crisis.

Stay in contact with each other. The technology that we have available today allows us to “almost be there” with anybody we choose.

Introduction

First Peter is a Book that is all about the subject of suffering and trials. As the name implies, it was written by Peter to believers, actually “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” Peter was the Apostle to the Jews, but by the time of this writing in around 63 A.D. Christianity was made up of mostly Gentiles who would have been encouraged by this letter as much as were the Jews. This letter was written at a time when Jewish Christians were experiencing intense persecution from the religious leadership within Judaism; and all believers, both Jew and Gentile alike were suffering at the hands of the Roman Empire. Nero would be on the throne of the Roman Empire during this period, and he was an insane madman who had a passionate hatred for Christians.

John Phillips gives a very vivid description of Nero:

He was just three years old when his father died. It was little loss to the boy. for his father had been a killer, a bully, and a cheat. His mother took over the family trade and continued the boy’s education. She murdered his stepfather with a dish of poisoned mushrooms. He was reared in squalor and proved a notable son to his parents. While still young, he committed his first murder, killing a teenage boy who stood in his way and watching him die with callous indifference. He married at fifteen but soon had his wife

killed. He married again and slew his second wife too. In order to marry a third time, he murdered the husband of the woman he wanted. His mother annoyed him; so he arranged her murder, first by guile, but when that was unsuccessful, without pretense. He was an ugly man with a bull neck, beetle brows, a flat nose, and a tough mouth. He had a pot belly, spindly legs, bad skin, and offensive odor. At the age of thirty-one he was sentenced to death by flogging. He fled to a dingy basement and, in the house of a slave, cut his own throat. He gave the infant church its first taste of things to come. His name was Nero. He was the first of the persecuting Caesars of Rome.¹

Nero was the emperor responsible for the martyrdom of Paul and Peter somewhere around 67 A.D. along with many others. Nero was a psychopathic murderer who had a blood-lust for killing Christians. Some of his infamous cruelties include the following:

- He dressed them in skins of beasts so that they would be torn by dogs or wild animals.
- He crucified them in a variety of fashions.
- He burned and smoked them after having cut them and scourged them.
- He nailed them to a stake and wrapped them in mantles and burned them, using them to light the streets of the city and even his private gardens.

It is believed that Nero actually burnt down much of the city of Rome and blamed it on the Christians.

This Book (1st Peter) was written during this time, possibly shortly before Nero's reign began, or when it was just beginning.

Christians were suffering.

Christians are also suffering today, although this present "invisible enemy" is not singling out Christians, it is certainly causing a great deal of turmoil in the world in which we are living.

The message from 1st Peter will encourage us all to stay faithful to the Lord and to each other through periods of trial and suffering; like the time that we are all going through right now.

This message is not intended to be a verse-by-verse examination of this letter, but rather is an attempt to give us just quick glimpses of some of the many helpful nuggets of truth within the letter.

- 1. Know that this trial will both glorify God and make you a better Christian. (1 Peter 1:7)**
- 2. As we go through this trial, let's continue to love one another. (1 Peter 1:22; 1 Peter 3:8 – 11; 1:4:8 - 9)**

Before Jesus left the disciples, He told them to love one another:

¹ Phillips, J. (2009). *Exploring Revelation: An Expository Commentary* (Re 2:8–11). Kregel; WORDsearch Corp.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:34-35)

We need each other, and though we cannot all be with each other right now because of this quarantine of sorts, we can still love each other.

Illustrate – Cindy baked cookies; Sami and Justin sent out little care packages.

Look for ways to communicate your love to other Christians during this time.

Look for ways to demonstrate the love of Christ to the lost world during this time.

3. As you are going through this crisis, be sure to get spiritual nourishment from the Word of God. (1 Peter 2:2; other verses about the Word - 1:23 - 25)

And, don't forget to pray (1 Peter 4:7; 5:6 - 7)

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Peter 5:6-7)

4. As you are going through this crisis watch your testimony. (1 Peter 2:11 – 12)

Illustrate – Larry had a lady fighting with him over chicken in the grocery store; Cindy had a very impatient cashier.

5. Obey the mandates put out by our leaders. They are not our enemy. (1 Peter 2:13 – 17)

The government has not mandated that we do not meet together. Religious purposes are actually exempt. However, we have chosen to submit to their recommendation of not physically meeting together because we believe that God has ordained the government to handle this crisis, and as long as they are not commanding us to disobey God, we will be good citizens.

6. Remember that you are Christ's Ambassador, especially during a time like this. (1 Peter 4:11)

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

We need to remember that we have the privilege and responsibility to say what Christ would have us to say, and to do what Christ would have us to do.

7. Don't let the Devil win in this situation (1 Peter 5:8 – 9)

Conclusion

These are certainly very strange and trying times that we are living in; but remember that God's people have dealt with times like these for centuries. I have had a fairly easy, trouble-free life here in America up until this point; and, truth be told, I am not really suffering all that much

during this crisis, but I am concerned about the state of affairs in our world. I am a little afraid that the status quo is changing rapidly for all of us. Life as we know it will likely be radically different in the days ahead. As God's people, we must be strong. We must see that God has allowed us to be his special representatives for this world that we live in, "for such a time as this."

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

Remember Christian – God loves you and wants to use you to glorify Him and impact the world around you through this crisis.

Remember also – that we love you. If we can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to call me.

If you are watching this and you are not sure about whether you are saved, please trust Christ today.

God wants you to know for sure that you can go to Heaven when you die:

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13)

Jesus loves you.

Jesus died for you.

Jesus is willing to save you if you will trust Him.

You are a sinner – *"all have sinned..."; "there is none righteous..."*

The payment for sin is death – *"the wages of sin is death..."*

Jesus died to pay for your sin – *"but God commendeth His love"; "... but the gift of God"*

If you'll trust Him, He'll save you.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:9-10, 13)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16-17)

Trust Christ Today