

Sunday Morning Message

October 4, 2020

1 Peter 1:6 - 12 – Strengthening Your Faith Through Seasons of Suffering
Series – 1st and 2nd Peter - *Experiencing God's Grace In the Midst of Suffering*

Text – 1 Peter 1:6 - 12

Congregational Reading – 1 Peter 1:6 - 9

Introduction

The word' "wherein," in verse six is a connecting word that links to the previous verse:

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

The main idea in verse five was our salvation. When we think about our salvation, there are many things that we can "greatly rejoice" about.

- We can rejoice that our salvation secure – "kept by the power of God."

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John 10:27-30)

- We can rejoice in the present benefits that come with salvation. Salvation is not only in the future, it's today. We are saved – present tense.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

1. We are the children of God today. There are a lot of benefits that come with being God's child.
2. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit of God today.
3. We have provision:

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

4. We have protection in His presence:

"... for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

- Then there is the future benefit of going to Heaven (and not going to Hell).

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

There are a lot of wonderful benefits today and in the future regarding our salvation, but there are also going to be seasons of suffering while we are still here on this earth.

Illustrate – We are all corporately going through a trial right now. This COVID-19 pandemic has affected many of us physically as well as financially. It has caused us to burrow underground at times for safety reasons.

Yet, whatever the suffering we might be called upon to endure while sojourning here on this earth, we know that it is only for a season – just a short while. Most likely, our circumstances of suffering will change down here on the earth. But, even if they don't, we are only here on earth for a short time – just a season – and in Heaven there are no trials or temptations; no suffering.

We have entitled this series of messages in 1st and 2nd Peter – *"Experiencing God's Grace in the Midst of Suffering."* These particular verses that we are examining today will encourage us to trust in His grace and to strengthen our faith through seasons of suffering.

I. Trials Are Part of Life (verse 6)

Notice the phrase "manifold temptations" – The word, "manifold," means different kinds or various. The word, "temptations," is a little trickier. Sometimes that word has the idea of being tempted to do something, like when Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1 – 11; Mark 1:12 - 13; Luke 4:1 – 13).

Illustrate – If I was to put a \$100.00 bill on the ground in the foyer of the church, it might be a temptation for somebody.

However, many times the word "temptation" has to do with going through trials. The word literally means to be tested. We might use the phrase – "you're testing my patience." God allows us to go through various kinds of trials while we are here on the earth.

In a general way, everyone on planet earth experiences trials:

"... he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45)

However, God will allow and sometimes even cause His children to go through "manifold temptations." Physical Trials, Financial trials, Family problems, the death of a loved one; the list goes on and on. The difference is that the lost world – people who do not know Christ will experience these trials without the help of God. The people of God will always have God with them as they go through the trials.

Illustrate -

Footprints in the Sand by Mary Stevenson (1939)

One night I dreamed I was walking
along the beach with the Lord.

Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed that
during the low periods of my life, when I was
suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord, "You promised me
Lord, that if I followed you,
you would walk with me always.

But I have noticed that during the most trying periods
of my life there have only been
one set of footprints in the sand.

Why, when I needed you most,
you have not been there for me?"

**The Lord replied,
"The times when you have
seen only one set of footprints,
is when I carried you."**

Notice also that these seasons of Manifold temptations produce “heaviness” or sorrow. It’s OK to have a season of sorrow, but don’t let the manifold temptations of this life rob you of your great rejoicing. Great rejoicing should not be based upon our circumstances. It should be based upon the promise of eternal salvation and the indwelling presence of God in our lives.

Notice also the phrase – “if need be” – This gives us the idea that these trials are necessary – they serve a purpose.

II. Trials Are Precious (v. 7)

1. They are precious because they purify our faith.

Illustrate – Texas Diecast – The aluminum was purified when heated – the dross had to be skimmed off the top.

In the same way, trials will purify our faith and our lives. They will cause some things to be removed from our lives that are not beneficial to us, spiritually.

Illustration

A blacksmith known for his strong faith, had a great deal of illness. He was challenged by an unbeliever to explain why his God would let him suffer.

He explained, "I take a piece of iron, put it into the fire to bring it to a white heat, then I strike it once or twice to see if it will take temper. I plunge it into water to change the temperature, put it into the fire again, then I put it on the anvil and make a useful article out of it.

"If it will not take temper when I first strike it on the anvil, I throw it into the scrap heap and sell it for a half-penny per pound. I believe God has been testing me to see if I will take temper. I have tried to bear it as patiently as I could, and my daily prayer has been, 'Lord, put me into the fire if you will; put me into the water if you think I need it; do anything you please, O Lord, only do not throw me on the scrap heap.'"

2. They are precious because they have a purpose.

Illustrate – Excerpt from “For My Good and For His Glory”

It's for my
good and for his glory,

This trial's not the end of the story,
There's a bigger picture
God alone can see,
He will take me through this sorrow
For I know he holds tomorrow,
And he assures me, it's for
my good and for His Glory

God may be using the trial to teach me something. He may be using me as a picture for somebody else to look at. God is glorified when His children endure trials patiently and with joy.

3. They are precious because they prepare us for Heaven.

Notice the phrase – “might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ.” God is purifying His children and purposing His children in order to prepare us for Heaven:

Illustration - Shaped for Glory

During the Great Depression, a good man lost his job, exhausted his savings and forfeited his home. His grief was multiplied by the sudden death of his precious wife. The only thing he had left was his faith-and it was weakening.

One day he was combing the neighborhood looking for work. He stopped to watch some men who were doing the stonework on a church building. One of these men was skillfully chiseling a triangular piece of rock. Not seeing a spot where it would fit, he asked, "Where are you going to put that?" The man pointed toward the top of the building and said, "See that little opening up near the spire? That is where it goes. I am shaping it down here so it will fit in up there."

Some of you are going through terrible, troublesome times. You may be experiencing some heartbreaking sorrow. Or perhaps you are enduring some painful physical illness. Or it may be something else-maybe even too excruciating to talk to anyone about. The blows of the hammer and chisel hurt.

But hold on to your faith. These difficulties will not get you down. They are only temporary. Glory is coming. It is the harsh blows to the outward man that often bring the greatest strength to the inner man.

Keep praying. Keep believing. The Master has to do some shaping of us down here so we will fit in up there.

III. Trials Will Point Us to Our Salvation (vs. 8 – 12)

Trials will point us back to the One who we trusted in. (verse 8)

Notice – we haven't seen Him in the flesh:

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)" (2 Corinthians 5:6-7)

When we go through trials, God reminds us of what is important – really Who is important. We have placed our faith in Christ. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He has got us in His hand. We can trust him. All we need to do is hold on to His grace. His grace will get us through.

Illustrate – Paul never lost the thorn, but he always kept the grace (2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10). If God's grace was sufficient for all that Paul had to endure in his life, don't you think it will be sufficient for you and me as well.

Trials will point us forward to what lies ahead for us in the future. (verse 9) Sometimes life here on this earth can be a little trying, but Heaven awaits us. Heaven is an awesome place. We cannot completely fathom what Heaven will be like. When I think about my mansion, I don't think about a building. I think about a mountainside, with a creek or a lake, or both. No bugs – perfect temperature. God took six days to create this earth, but he has been working on our mansions for two thousand years. Heaven will be awesome. No sin, no sorrow, no suffering.

1. This salvation was predicted by the prophets (vs. 10 – 11)

The Old Testament Prophets predicted salvation through Christ, but they did not fully understand the grace of God being manifested, especially upon the Gentiles, in the New Testament:

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:" (Colossians 1:26-27)

They also predicted the sufferings of Christ (Isaiah 53); and the glory of Christ (Psalm 2).

2. This salvation is peered upon by angels (v. 12)

They are gazing intently upon salvation.

Notice all of the agents involved in bringing us the Word of God that points us to this salvation: the Old Testament Prophets predicted it, the Holy Ghost gave them the inspired words, and He also gives us understanding of the gospel. The N. T. Prophets and Apostles (“unto us” verse 12) searched those O. T. Prophecies and clarified them for us; and even the angels are constantly desiring (Present Active Indicative – ongoing action) to look into salvation – to intently gaze upon it.

Conclusion

Suffering – Trials – Temptations – They are part of life. You are going to go through seasons of suffering. They are not necessarily because you are doing something wrong, though they can be because God is trying to teach you something.

We need to remember that these trials have a purpose, and that they purify us, and prepare us for Heaven.

We must also remember that trials are seasonal. They won’t last forever.

You can and should have joy, even in the midst of the trial.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:2-5)

God is with you; He is going through it with you. He will give you everything that you need to get through it. Allow your faith in Him to be strengthened through the trial. Lean upon on His grace.

Illustrate – This Covid-19 thing that I may be experiencing is a trial. I need to find out what God is doing in me, in my family, and in this church through it; and I need to discover what God wants me to do through it. One thing I do know is that He will be with me every step of the way.

And the same promise applies to whatever you have to face in this life. God’s got you, and God’s got whatever situation you are going through.

Illustration - Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Thomas Andrew Dorsey was a jazz musician from Atlanta. In the twenties he gained a certain amount of notoriety as the composer of jazz tunes with suggestive lyrics, but he gave all that up in 1926 to concentrate exclusively on spiritual music. "Peace in the Valley" is one of his best-known songs, but there is a story behind his most famous song that deserves to be told.

In 1932, the times were hard for Dorsey. Just trying to survive the depression years as a working musician meant tough sledding. On top of that, his music was not accepted by many people. Some said it was much too worldly-the devil's music, they called it. Many years later Dorsey could laugh about it. He said, "I got kicked out of some of the best churches in the land." But the real kick in the teeth came one night in St. Louis when he received a telegram informing him that his pregnant wife had died suddenly.

Dorsey was so filled with grief that his faith was shaken to the roots, but instead of wallowing in self-pity, he turned to the discipline he knew best-music. In the midst of agony, he wrote the following lyrics:

Precious Lord, take my hand,

Lead me on, let me stand.

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.

Through the storm, through the night,

Lead me on to the light;

Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.

If you live long enough, you will experience heartache, disappointment, and sheer helplessness. The Lord is our most precious resource in those hours of trauma. "The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9). Tom Dorsey understood that. His song was originally written as a way of coping with his personal pain, but even today it continues to bless thousands of others when they pass through times of hardship.