

The End of All Things is Here

1 Peter 5:5-14

(preached Pine Grove 2/9/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

Since we have been in 1 Peter, I am constantly looking for articles on suffering from a worldly perspective.

I want to see what the world thinks about suffering, and more importantly, what the world does to deal with suffering.

Just this this, I came across an article entitled “How Do We Move Through Suffering?”

It was by Jennifer Linder, a self-described parenting and life coach.

The article with the question, - what do we do with suffering?

And after some introductory thoughts, here is what she offered..

“We (need to) quiet our bodies and minds, even if only for a few minutes, in order to witness, not identify with, our thoughts? Whether it is through meditation, breathing, or simply closing our eyes for a short while and repeating a mantra or

listening to a fan, it is here, in this interior spaciousness and stillness, that we can begin to shift from the one who feels the pain to the one observing it.

Only in this detachment, however slight or brief it is, can we truly acknowledge where we are is really hard; that we are desperately sad; that we hate feeling this way; AND YET it's okay. It's okay, because, in spite of all of this, we have compassion for our hurt, grief-stricken selves."

So the first step in suffering is to get outside yourself, whatever that means and to simply observe your suffering from a distance.

Then she says that we must begin to speak to ourself.

"(We then begin) speaking kindly to ourselves as we would to a child? "I know it hurts," we should say. "I'm so sorry this is so tough. You are right to be so sad." And then, with complete openness and love, we say, "I am here for you. I am here for whatever you need. There is no rush. Take your time." We don't run from the pain. We don't deny it. We don't bury our heads in the sands of some spiritual exercise. We see suffering. We affirm suffering and then we give it a voice. We free it to be what it is."

So let's get this straight.

Jennifer Linder says that suffering can be endured by stepping outside and talking to yourself.

That my friends is an illustration of Romans 1.

That is a depraved mind that makes up something that sounds good and seems it as truth.

Suffering is not something that you can talk your way out of.

Suffering is real and tragic and inescapable in a fallen world.

And for the believer, we don't move through suffering in our own wisdom, we move through with the Lord's wisdom.

And much of His wisdom on suffering well can be found in 1 Peter.

This book becomes the handbook for Christian suffering, and we have been blessed by it as we equip ourselves to suffer rightly.

So how would the Bible say that we move through our suffering?

Well, Peter is going to give us a rapid fire review to close out this letter.

Tonight, we are going to finish off this book with some foundational truths about enduring suffering.

And though we could devote 2 or 3 messages to these final verses, much will be a review of what the Lord has already taught us in this letter.

So, let's just begin in the first part of verse 5 with a simple reminder that suffering requires submission.

I. Suffering Calls for Submission (5a)

Let's begin with the first few words of verse 5 tonight.

5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders;

Last week, we looked at the responsibility of elders in the church.

These biblically qualified men are called to shepherd the flock of God among them.

They are to serve voluntarily and eagerly as they feed and protect the believers that the Lord entrusts to them.

And they are to do it with gentleness as they lead by example.

The reason that Peter addressed elders in this letter is because suffering congregations need responsible and loving elders.

They need men who are spiritually mature and capable of leading the flock in times of trouble.

And we noted that churches are to be thankful to men who lead well.

And they are to depend upon those men in times of corporate or personal suffering.

But how else should the church respond to elders?

Well, the church is called to submit to the elders that God has put over them.

Hebrews 13:7, 17

7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the [a]result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. [e]Let them do this with joy and not [f]with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

12 But we request of you, brethren, that you [i]appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you [j]instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

As long as elders are qualified and fulfilling their biblical, the people are to submit to the elders over them.

But in verse 5, Peter points out a particular group that needs to live in submission to elders and these are the younger men of the church.

Now why single them out for instruction?

Well, I think it is related to the theme of the letter.

During times of persecution, younger men seem to be more aggressive in their response.

They are often ready to fight back and Peter simply reminds here to submit to their elders.

There is wisdom in listening to and following the directions of those who are more spiritually mature.

And often times, younger men need to be reminded to listen to those who have charge over them in the Lord.

Submission is a theme of this letter in chapter 2 and 3 where Peter reminds believers to submit to government, submit to work master, submit in family relationships and submit in the church.

And the point of all that is to encourage believers to trust the Lord.

Submission says I am not in charge, but I will trust the Lord and the people he has put over me.

Whether that is a boss, a government official, or an elder.

If there is any foundational practice of those who are suffering, it is need to live in submission to the Lord.

Persecution may tempt you to take matters into your own hands, but Scripture would urge us to matters into the Lord's hands and the hands of those we are called to submit to.

A second way to suffer the Lord's way is found in the second half of verse 5 and all of verse 6..

II. Suffering Calls for Humility (5b-6)

While Peter pointed to the young men to submit, he calls for the entire church to live in humility.

and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

The idea of clothing yourself in humility uses a Greek word that suggests the putting on of an apron.

Your literally cover yourself in humility when you encounter suffering.

Peter may have had Jesus in mind as he calls believers to clothe themselves with humility.

Remember it was Jesus who took a towel and girded himself and washed the disciples feet in the greatest act of humility ever.

And it was Jesus who humbled himself all the way to the cross.

Why is humility important in suffering?

Well, humility prevents the pity party where you think that you have it worse than anybody.

Humility keeps us low and the Lord high.

Humility helps us to keep the proper perspective.

And humility leads to God's grace, which is certainly needed in the trials of life.

The end of verse 5 is a reference to Proverbs 3:34

34

***Though God scoffs at the scoffers,
Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.***

Help in suffering does come by rising up, it comes as we lower ourselves in humility and receive God's grace to endure.

In fact, verse 6 says that we are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God so that he can exalt us at the proper time.

Never forget that trials and suffering are from the hand of the Lord.

And He uses them in our life to increase our faith, grow our assurance.

And our job is to remain humble as we suffer under God's hand, knowing that same hand will sustain and deliver us from the trial at the appropriate time.

So suffering calls for humility.

And it also calls for trust.

Look at verse 7..

III. Suffering Calls for Trust (7)

7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

There is no question that suffering tempts us to be anxious.

The Greek word for anxiety is the idea of being drawn multiple directions at the same time.

It can even be translated “care”.

In fact, the King James says, “casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.”

But this is the idea of caring too much and being stretched and stressed in multiple directions.

We tend to think that we can handle the suffering or we can stop the suffering or we can contain the suffering.

But that is a result of sinful pride, so the Lord commands us to cast our cares on Him.

The Greek word for cast was often used for tossing a saddle on a horse.

The only other time it appears in the NT is when they brought the colt to Jesus and spread their coat on its back so he could ride it into Jerusalem.

In the same way, we must cast our anxiety on Christ.

And why is that?

Simple.

HE cares for us.

The Greek word for care is *melo*.

In the boat on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus fell asleep while the storm raged all around them.

The disciples woke Jesus up and said, “Teacher, do you not care (*melo*) that we are perishing?”

Talk about anxiety.

And what did Jesus say?

39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and [k]it became perfectly calm. 40 And He said to them, “Why are you [l]afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

We cast our anxiety on Christ because he does care for us.

WE cast our cares on Christ because he can still the storms of life, and even if he doesn't stop the suffering, he bears the weight of our anxiety.

When we suffer, we must trust.

Though we could spend the next hour on verse 7, we must move on..

A 4th discipline in suffering is found in verse 8..

IV. Suffering Calls for Seriousness (8)

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Way back in 1 Peter 1 and again in 1 Peter 4, the Lord commands those suffering to be sober in spirit.

And we noted that was a call to seriousness as we suffer.

It is easy to let our guard down as we suffer.

It is easy to throw our hands in air and give up as we suffer.

But suffering calls for soberness and also alertness.

And why is that?

Well in 1 Peter 1, soberness was necessary for clear thinking so that we could make right decisions.

In 1 Peter 4, soberness was necessary for the purpose of prayer.

And now in 1 Peter 5, soberness is necessary to avoid Satanic attack.

Peter remind us that our enemy, the devil, is prowling seeking to devour suffering Christians.

Look, the devil and his demons have no pity for Christians who suffer.

In fact, suffering Christians become targets for the enemy.

All the top predators in the animal world prefer to go after weak and wound prey.

Sharks will make a meal out of a wounded seal.

In fact, blood in the water is a sign of injury and opportunity.

The same is true of the lion.

He will chase down a perfectly healthy antelope, but he would prefer the injured one.

Satan and his minions are simply opportunistic predators.

Suffering Christians become targets.

Now understand, Satan is not likely the one attacking you.

He is limited in where he can be and what He can do, but his forces of darkness can certainly come after you.

And also know that Satan or his legion of demons cannot take your salvation.

He that is in the believer is greater than he that is in the world.

But those are not reasons to let your guard down.

So Peter tells us to be sober and alert.

In fact, the Greek word for alertness is the idea of vigilance or careful attention.

It was used in Greek literature for someone who was crossing a river by stepping on stones, which requires the highest level of alertness.

Needless to say, living the Christian life calls for seriousness and alertness, and the call for them is heightened in times of suffering.

A fifth requirement in suffering is found in verse 9..

V. Suffering Call for Determination (9)

Because of Satan's prowling and desiring to devour believers, we need to be sober, alert, and determined.

Look at verse 9...

But resist him, firm in your faith,...

The way to deal with Satanic attack is to simply resist it.

These words for resist and stand firm are from the Greek military world.

It is picture of holding the line against the attack of the enemy.

We don't retreat from Satan.

We simply stand in the truth.

I hear people all time talk about binding Satan, but that idea is found nowhere in Scripture.

Satan can't be bound by people.

He is roaming the earth, and the only one with power to bind him is the Lord.

So we don't go on the offensive against Satan.

We simply hold the line.

We hold fast to the truth.

We don't give in to the temptations.

We resist Satanic attacks.

And we do by that being grounded in the truth and standing on the Rock of Christ.

We also stand firm knowing that we are standing with other believers around the world..

Look at the end of verse 9..

But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

We stand firm in the truth and stand together with the body of Christ around the world.

For Peter's original readers, they could take comfort in the fact that their brothers and sisters were in this battle with them.

In fact, the entire church in the Roman Empire was feeling the sting of Christian suffering, and that was motivation to stand firm.

And that should be motivation today as well.

The true church is standing firm on the truth today.

Sure, some churches are retreating from the truth, some are even joining the enemy.

But the true church around the world is holding the line, so we must hold the line here.

But that is not all the motivation to stand firm and suffer well, verses 10 and 11 remind us that..

VI. Suffering Calls for Optimism (10-11)

10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

One thing to note in suffering is that we have no guarantee that it will end.

We may tell people, “this too shall pass,” but that is found nowhere in Scripture.

Even verse 10 is no guarantee that suffering will come to an end.

Peter says that after you have suffering “a little while,” but I can assure that a little while could mean a lifetime, which is a little while compared to eternity.

The promise of verse 10 is that believers will eventually be delivered from suffering even if it means death.

In fact, the language of this verse speaks of death.

WE will only be perfected at death.

And you may say, well how is this optimistic?

It is optimistic knowing that suffering will end, even if it ends in death.

And if that is the case, the suffering will end in glory.

But there are even times when God brings some sufferings to an end in our lifetimes.

Our obligation is to simply know that God is a God of all grace, and if He has called us, he will care for us and eventually deliver us from suffering.

For the believer, suffering is not an eternal sentence.

It is a temporary sentence that will end in time or in glory.

Ultimately, suffering is under the dominion of the Lord.

In other words, there is a purpose in it.

And Peter reminds his readers that even their difficulties are under the eternal dominion of the Lord.

We can be optimistic knowing that suffering will end and that God is fully in control of it and using it for our good and His eternal glory.

One more requirement for suffering can be found in the closing of this letter.

Let's call this...

VII. Suffering Calls for Encouragement (13-14)

Verse 12..

12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to all who are in Christ.

No ending to any letter in the NT has generated more comments than the end of 1 Peter.

The first thing to note is that God inspired Peter to write this letter but Peter must have asked Silvanus to write it down.

Which isn't a problem.

It is just an interesting reality to think about.

And then there is the issue of Babylon.

Some say that Peter was writing this letter from Rome and simply used Babylon to refer to the city of Rome because of all the corruption there.

It would also prevent Roman officials from knowing that Peter was in Rome should they read a copy of this letter.

Other say that Peter was in Babylon, the actual city that was once the capital of the Babylonian empire.

The city that will one day be the headquarters of the Antichrist.

To be honest, I have gone back and forth about this.

I think both sides make good cases for their views.

When I did my background research on the introduction to this letter, I felt like Rome was the place that Peter was writing from.

However after spending a lot of time reading about verse 13, I think it is likely that Peter may have been writing from the actual city of Babylon, having gone there to preach the gospel.

Ultimately, it makes no difference.

The point of this closing is to encourage the church.

As Peter just said in verse 9, the church is all over the world and all are standing firm in the faith.

Silvanus is a faithful friend.

The church in Rome is a faithful church.

Mark is a faithful friend of Peter.

In sum, the church isn't suffering alone, but as it suffers, it is encouraged by the faithfulness of so many.

In suffering, we need to be encouraged and we need to encourage others.

Conclusion

So what is the take away from this incredible letter?

#1 - Suffering is expected in the world.

Jesus said in this world, you will have trouble.

And that is the norm for believers.

We should be surprised by trouble.

Peter said in chapter 4..

“12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you,”

To know Christ is to know suffering.

#2 - Suffering is beneficial to the believer.

Though we would like to avoid suffering, it blesses us in many ways.

It grows our assurance if we keep the faith during and after the trouble.

It increases our dependence upon the Lord.

It helps us identify with Christ and therefore love him more.

It makes us sharper mentally as we stay sober and alert in order to pray, think biblically, and watch for the evil one.

To suffer is to grow in our faith.

#3 - Suffering makes us long for heaven.

If there one thing that suffering reminds us of, it is the fact that this world is not our home.

We long for a world without suffering, and that world is coming to all who have put their faith in Christ.

As Peter told us in 1 Peter 4:7.

The end of all things is near.

And thought that used to frighten me as an unbeliever, it excites me as a believer to know that this current fallen world will end and a new heavens and earth will begin.