

Small Group Outline for Week of January 25, 2021
Growing through Life's Difficulties – 1 Peter 3:13-18; 4:12-19

Introduction

The Apostle Peter has a particular theme that weaves itself thru his letter to these Christians. There are several sentences and paragraphs within his letter that speak to enduring unfair treatment for doing good and right, and to how to endure in persecution for being a Christian

- 2:12 “Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong...”
- 2:15 "...your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.”
- 2:19-20 “For God is pleased when conscious of His will, you patiently endure unjust treatment... but if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.”
- 3:8-9 "...Instead pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and He will grant you with his blessing.”

Read 1 Peter 3:13-18

The Apostle Peter is continuing to encourage and teach the believers how to endure while experiencing difficult times; trials, testings, temptations, sufferings

3:13-14

- Who would want to harm you if you are eager to do good? Why is Peter saying this?

3:14b-16 How do we do we have courage to do good and do right? Look at these 4 things:

1. 14b Don't worry or be afraid of their threats - why? How?
 - Isaiah 8:12-13
2. Instead, worship/revere/sanctify/set apart/honor Christ as Lord of your life.
 - a. How do we do that?
3. Be ready to explain your hope as a believer as you will be given the opportunity to share your faith
 - a. Why would you be able to explain your hope?
 - b. How do you explain your hope?
4. Keep your conscience clear
 - a. Why is this important?

Peter is repeating himself...

- Note vs 11: it seems like Peter was ending his letter; but it appears that he feels the needs to further encourage; perhaps hearing more about the terrible Emperor of Rome, Nero, and all that he is doing to severely persecute the Church.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 Peter says, “Don’t be surprised of the fiery trials.” This is the first time he gives a descriptive word to trials - fiery. They appear to be surprised by the changes and challenges that they didn’t see coming; that may have shook their world, their perspective, their lives of peace.

- He encourages us - he is trying to give courage into our hearts
- See 4:13 and 1:6 - Be glad - God is working on us

4:14 We will be blessed as the Holy Spirit rests on us - to strengthen us - we are not alone

*"The most striking feature of this section is its bold emphasis on the **sovereignty and initiative of God**, even in the suffering of his own people."* (Thomas Constable)

Note 4:12 in 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.**”

- 1:6 many trials, all kinds of trials

A Perspective:

There is one very difficult verse that we won't like here, that Peter places on purpose in the middle of verses on suffering:

- **1 Peter 4:15-17.**
- Could it be that God is judging and refining our Church; the Church of Jesus Christ around the world? Could it be that he is judging us as WEFC; could it be that He is refining us? How will we come out of this?
- Re-look at 1:6-7 trials, testings, sufferings are for our good and to develop our faith
- How does the current pandemic COVID 19 factor into our trials and testings?
- Do you think God could use COVID to refine the Church?

Weekly Challenge:

- Re-read the whole book of 1 Peter - even in audio (You Version) in a few translations
- Underline the words "trials," "suffering," and other words found in 1 Peter
- List how your Heavenly Father has been taking care of you - because He has.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where your attitude and perspective needs to change as you consider your troubles and testing and temptations.

Conclusion: Be encouraged - have courage

1 Peter 1:8-9

1 Peter 4:19

- NIV "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their **faithful Creator** and continue to do good."

1 Peter 5:6

Share with each other any trials and testing you may be going through. Pray for each other in light of what we just studied.

These passages talk much about persecution, though most of us can't relate. Take some time to pray for the Persecuted Church around the world.