



A BETTER RESISTANCE | EXPECT SUFFERING (14)

MAY 2, 2021

1 Peter 4:12-17

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

BACKGROUND

"As the letter draws to a close, Peter reminds his readers that they should not be astonished when they suffer. God is using the suffering to purify the church; therefore they should unreservedly give themselves to God in their suffering." (From the ESV Study Bible)

PURPOSE

To understand how suffering can deepen our hope in Jesus

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does this passage teach us about suffering "as a Christian?" What hope does Peter give for those who are in the midst of suffering?
2. What role has suffering played in your own life and especially in your spiritual growth? How has your faith been "tested" (v.12) in the past year?

LEADER'S NOTES

Question 1: (v.12-13) Peter begins this new section by reminding his readers that they are "beloved" of God, and therefore, the object of God's affection and care. Specifically, he reminds them that suffering is the norm for Christians, not a surprising exception. To suffer as a Christian is a call to rejoice as a disciple of Christ, and such joy is the prelude to the joy that is to come at the return of Christ ("when his glory is revealed"). In other words, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus should be a paradigm by which we see how God accomplishes his purpose of redemption in and through Christ's suffering. In the same way, Christians can expect similar opposition and hardship that comes from living in a broken world and one that is alienated from God and that rejects Christ. But Christians can also expect to share in the glory of Christ when he returns to make all things new. (v.17) The justice of God at the end of time provides the foundation for that hope. God will repay all evil and wrongdoing because he is just. But in the midst of judgment, those who place their trust in Jesus will find that he has suffered in their place so that the judgment that they deserved fell upon him at the cross. (v.14) Furthermore, being insulted for the name of Christ is a blessing because it shows that the Spirit of God rests upon them in a powerful and evident way. (v.15-16) Finally, suffering as a follower of Jesus can be a powerful testimony to the power of God and it can bring honor to his name.

Question 2: You can help the members of your group to reflect on their own experience with suffering by sharing about one or two experiences in your life that has: 1) helped you to deal with an issue of brokenness or sin in your life, 2) has brought you closer to God or caused you to trust God more deeply, or 3) has deepened your hope in Christ. Oftentimes, suffering is humbling and forces us to look beyond ourselves for help and strength.

For many Christians, avoiding suffering can cause us to compromise our obedience to Christ or to diminish our opportunity to experience the fullness of God. Through suffering, Christians can experience the power of their faith to break the hold of sin and idolatry (worshiping anything other than God) in their lives and they can be confident that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28).