

The Glory of Suffering

1 Peter 1:10-12

Peter writes to give hope to exiled, isolated believers who are scattered throughout the Roman empire as a result of the persecution that began in Acts 8:1.

He's the perfect person to do it because he has experienced hopelessness.

The first chapter concerns:

- 1 – Our great salvation 1:3-12
- 2 – Our new way of life 1:13-25

a) – The hope of our salvation. 3-5 – *living, imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept, guarded,*

b) – The joy of our salvation. 6-9 – *trials, genuineness, precious praise, glory, honor, believe, inexpressible and filled with glory, the outcome*

c) – The witness of our salvation. 10-12

10-12 - Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

What salvation?

V 5 - a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time

Salvation is one of Peter's major themes. He's been 'saved,' from self, the devil, God's wrath and himself. He understands salvation.

His first point is to remind his readers that the prophets prophesied about the grace that God would give to Peter's readers based on the pattern of the prophet's ministries and Jesus's life.

I want you to walk through these verses with me. If you do, you will be helped, and you'll be able to help others also. This is important and particularly during this pandemic.

Hope does not mean we won't suffer.
If we didn't suffer there would be no reason for hope.

First: Suffering before glory. v 11

11 - *the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.* - John 16

The OT prophets predicted that Jesus would enjoy glory, but they didn't see his suffering. They certainly didn't understand how it fit together. And they certainly didn't see them both happening at the same time.

Based on what he knew the prophets said, and his own feelings for Jesus –

Mark 8:27-33 - And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"²⁸ And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

The prophets stood on a mountain and saw the next mountain, but they didn't see the valley in between. Neither did Peter. Neither do we.

ILL – During this Covid-19 pandemic, I have truly been concerned about some of our friends who think that life should be free of suffering and only health, wealth and happiness. Or that a suffering-free life is only a prayer or ‘claim’ away.

Some of our friends want permanent ‘glory’ with no suffering and refuse to accept the biblical pattern of suffering and then glory. The things we have tried to share with those friends, but they have denied, God is now teaching with indisputable evidence.

Our friends are not living in the real world....nor the real biblical world.

John 16:16-22 - A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.”¹⁷ So some of his disciples said to one another, “What is this that he says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’; and, ‘because I am going to the Father’?”¹⁸ So they were saying, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.”¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’?”²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

What is the origin of this thinking?

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of a statue of a man.

- a) Head – Gold = Babylon
- b) Chest & arms – silver = Medo-Persian
- c) Middle & thigh = bronze = Greece
- d) Legs – iron = Rome
- e) Stone cut without hands = Messiah

That's immediate. That's quick. That's conclusive. That's the kind of salvation the Jews were looking for and that's one of the reasons they missed Jesus.

The disciples also thought this – Acts 1:6 - *Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*”

And it's the kind of salvation we want. And that's the way that some people treat Jesus and Christianity. “If you can't solve all my problems right now, I have no time for you.”

But, when we come to the NT, Jesus reinterprets how Daniel 2 comes to pass:

Matthew 13:

- a) Sower - 1-8 – Some do not hear, some hear, and do not & some hear
- b) Tares - 24-30 – The good and the bad exist together
- c) Mustard Seed - 31-32 – The kingdom is too powerful to stop
- d) Leaven 33-35 – The kingdom grows slowly but surely
- e) Hidden Treasure – 44 – The kingdom is worth your life
- f) Pearl – 45-46 – the kingdom is worth everything
- g) Net – 47-51 – Kingdom members will only be revealed in the last day
- h) Jesus rejected – 53-58 – Jesus models the kingdom principle of suffering and glory

Jesus's parables in Matthew teach us that the kingdom doesn't come in one swift blow. Daniel's interpretation was a general overview of what will happen. But it doesn't actually happen like that. Rather than one swift blow, the kingdom comes slowly, progressively and surely. And as it does, there are a lot of ups and downs, believers and unbelievers coexisting alongside each other with all of the mess humanity makes. But the kingdom is unstoppable and worth everything.

And that is how we interpret Peter's reminder of 1:11 - *the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories*

Second: Others Before Self. v 12

12 - *they were serving not themselves but you*

Matthew 13:17 - *But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

This means Elijah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Habakkuk etc., suffered without seeing the purpose or end of their suffering. There was no glory for them at all.

James 5:11 - *Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

The OT prophets did not fully understand what they were prophesying in the same way that Job did not fully understand his suffering

But we, NT believers, see God's purposes in Job just as the disciples enjoyed the fruit of the prophet's labors. Job's suffering was for him and us.

In the same way, our suffering is not only for us but for others.

If we know anything about Christianity, we know this; that Christ's sufferings precede his glory. Look at this progression –

Philippians 2:8-9 –

- a) Suffering - *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
- b) Glory - *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,*

The “therefore” means “because of” or “as a result of”

And Jesus's suffering and glory is the pattern for our lives also.

In Christianity, there is no crown without the cross.

That's what 1 Peter 1, Daniel 2 and Matt 13 have to do with Covid-19. We are taught that suffering is

- natural,
- purposeful,
- worth enduring but
- painstakingly slow and
- not only for our benefit but for others.

And that is how we interpret 1:12 - *they were serving not themselves but you*

Conclusion:

This is a hard truth to live. And the text gives us another indication of this -

10-12 - *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

Matthew 26:53 - *Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?*

We can only assume that even angels did not understand the crucifixion.

Hope does not mean we won't suffer.
If we didn't suffer there would be no reason for hope.

Peter's point in verses 10-12 is that his readers could rejoice in their sufferings. Why?

- 1 – The OT saints did so
- 2 – Jesus did so
- 3 – The apostles did so
- 4 – It is the pattern for God's kingdom
- 5 – Their sufferings will be transformed into glory

Just as assuredly as Jesus first suffered and was then glorified, they too will suffer before enjoying glory. But suffering ensures glory.

In the interim, while they are suffering, they can also be encouraged to know that God is using their suffering to demonstrate his grace to an onlooking world.

In all of these things, Peter's readers can find the hope that will give them joy.

Suffering may equal glory but suffering also precedes glory