

“Suffering for The Right Reason”

Introduction

- Last week of, “Holy Cow, Living for God in an ungodly culture”
 - Suffering throughout each chapter of 1 Peter, skipped over until today
 - Suffering for Peter is not some philosophical / theoretical exercise; it’s personal
 - Letter Could have started, “I Peter, an expert on suffering, and a firsthand witness to Christ’s suffering, pray grace and peace be yours in abundance”

Tension: “If it turns out there was a God after all, and you could ask one question, what would it be?” 80% of questions surrounded suffering...Suffering on account of our faith is something most of us struggle with at some point in our journey. Focus this morning is just that - on insights / instructions does Peter have to share as one who is familiar with suffering. And what does ‘suffering on the account of Christ’ look like in the Western Church as most of us are not being beaten up, imprisoned or martyred on account of our faith; suffering, however, like it or not, is part of the deal if you are serious about following of Jesus

- So what are we talking about when we say ‘suffering’
- NOT talking about physical suffering due to sickness
- NOT talking about things not going well because we’ve made bad decision; Suffering for bad choices or doing evil is just consequences; reaping what you sow
- When talk about ‘suffering’ in context of faith, generally talking about suffering for the sake of the Gospel and for doing what is right

1 Peter 4:15-16 (NIV)

- In West, not likely to physically suffer in the Western Church / America
 - Chris & Brent hanging out at Starbucks on Wednesday, Bibles open on the table, talking about Jesus, and nobody roughed us up or dragged us off to jail
 - So not talking about physical suffering, but more emotional suffering, fear of rejection, potential loss of relationship, how people view us or attack of character (negative impact on our reputations); called the Jesus Freak or ‘goodie tooshoos’ at school or work...
 - Nobody likes suffering, but most Christians avoid it at all costs, EVEN at the cost of disobedience and a watered down witness
 - We Christians don’t want to offend anyone; we don’t want to lose customers, or church attenders, or have people talk about us negatively
 - In all honesty, we Christians today lack commitment and devotion

“Part of the reason we have created a culture of non-committal Christianity that avoids suffering is that we don’t treasure Him enough. We want Jesus, but there are limits to what we will sacrifice for Him. We want Him, but there are lots of things we want in life. The good news is placed on par with or even below other forms of “good news.” “I’m getting married!” “I’m having a child!” “The Giants won the World Series!” “God became flesh, was crucified for our sins, rose from the grave, and is returning to judge the world!” Other kinds of good news stir more emotion than the gospel. Think how insulting that kind of attitude must be to God!

-Francis Chan, Letters to the Church p. 140

- Our life becomes more about making a living, than living for Jesus [American Dream]; because living for Jesus is gonna require suffering, sacrifice, and we don’t even want to be inconvenienced... [this is not ‘attractual’, most Westerners don’t want to hear this...].a ‘conviction bomb’ for your pastor(s)

“Until we embrace the suffering that so many Christians embrace around the world, we’re not going to have an unstoppable Church. The Enemy is fighting so hard to keep us from reaching that place, because once we get there, he has no foothold.” P. 136

- Brother Yun, Heavenly Man, underwent severe physical torture and persucution, but said the persucution of words that he suffered in Germany was worse

What does 1 Peter reveal about suffering? Before dive into Peter’s words, lets first remember what Jesus said in John 15:18-20:

- “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

20 Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

- You're going to suffer for His name; you can count on it

REJOICE, Glory and Honor

1 Peter 1:6-7

- Rejoice
 - James 1:2-4 (NIV)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
 - Persevere
 - Refined by fire
 - Burns away anything that is not Pure
 - Purity
 - Star word
 - Suffering "proves what you're made of"
 - Coaching= adversity, don't know what you have till you face adversity

Commendable & Give an Account

1 Peter 2:19-21(NIV)

"Commendable" = 'thankworthy'; 'brings favor'; "God is pleased" if we endure unjust suffering because of our faith and love for God; the direct result of our enduring suffering on behalf of the Name of Christ is God's grace and favor, by which God "exerts his holy influence upon our souls, keeping, strengthening, increasing us in our Christian faith, knowledge, affection" [favor = charis = grace]

1 Peter 3:13-18

- We all fear suffering - Peter says, "Do not fear threats, do not be frightened" - easier said than done; we don't long for suffering; How can we overcome these fears?
 - "Revere Christ as Lord" in your heart; "Acknowledge" Christ as Lord in your heart
 - Do it out of obedience
 - Do it out of faith, remembering that "faith is not the absence of fear, but the capacity to act in the presence of fear and the judgement that something else is more important than fear" [obedience is more important than fear...serving Christ is more important]
- How many have heard the Scripture command in verse 15: 'Always be prepared to give an account for the hope that's in you'? How many know that it is found specifically in the context of suffering? - often remove that verse from any context, but the context is when in the midst of SUFFERING;
 - Much greater, weightier witness to share hope when going through suffering than when everything is going awesome in your life
 - And we are to give that account in such a way that those who slander you feel ashamed...
- Why did Jesus suffer? 'To bring you to God'
- Why are we to suffer? Obedience, and to bring others to God {interesting fruit of suffering}

IF WE ARE NOT SUFFERING, or at least inconvenienced, FOR OUR FAITH, ARE WE TRULY FOLLOWING JESUS, OR ARE WE ALLOWING SOME OTHER GOD (comfort, wealth, complacency, etc.) to be our god?

Resurrection on other side of Suffering

1 Peter 5:10-11(NIV)

- Think about Jesus' example
- Suffered for doing good, humbled himself to the cross
- Suffered to the point of death

- Why? for you, me, all the world, take our place
- Made a way for us to get into Heaven and Heaven get into us
- But don't forget resurrection waited on the other side of crucifixion
 - Sure he suffered and died
 - But he rose from the dead and lives and reigns and one day "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord"
- Resurrection is on the other side of Crucifixion & suffering
- Here
 - Suffered for a little while
 - Seasons of suffering
 - Can't take as a human a lifetime of suffering
 - Brother Yun
 - Resurrection on the other side
 - Peter says "The God of all grace, after you suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."
 - You will be better than you were before= tested, pure and the God of power who raised Jesus from the dead will "make you strong, firm and steadfast."
 - He does it through His power and gives you His strength

Closing