

"The Believer's Suffering"

Part 11

1 Peter 3:13-5:14

Introduction: As believers we are living in some days that can result in gloominess if we are not care. If you take you eyes off the Lord and begin to look at the circumstances around, you it can be overwhelming.

Matthew 14:22-30

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

*30 But **when he saw the wind boisterous**, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*

When Peter began to look at the wind and the waves he started to sink. This is exactly what happens to us when we begin to focus upon the storms and the circumstances that are surrounding us.

In our text tonight there is encouragement for us when we face the times of suffering in this life.

I. The Inevitable Judgment

Notice 1 Peter 4:17a

There is much for us to see in this verse. The word "MUST" should catch our attention here. The judgment which Peter is talking about is inevitable because it is a MUST. But what is he talking about when he mentions judgment beginning at the house of God? The "house of God" is the church. Now someone would look at this and ask, "Did not our Lord take all of our judgment when He hung upon the cross?" The answer to that is, "YES!" So then what is Peter writing about. The judgment which Peter speaks of here beginning at the house of God is not a judgment for sin. It is a judgment of purging and refining. It is chastening at the loving hand of God.

Hebrews 12:5-11

⁵ *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*

⁶ *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

⁷ *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*

⁸ *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

⁹ *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*

¹⁰ *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

¹¹ *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

This is what Peter is writing about as well as the stone cutters and the furnaces of life. This must happen. The Bible says we are holy people, it says that we are loving people, it says that we are being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ, so the chastening, stone cutters, and the furnaces are to help make us what the Bible tells us we are.

Notice 1 Peter 4:17a again.

Let us notice that the judgment of God BEGINS with the believers but where does it go from there?

Notice 1 Peter 4:17b

The idea that Peter has here is that many believers are living their fiery trial now, but unbelievers will have their fiery trial later. We endure the fiery trials to purify us but the fiery trials for the unbeliever will be punishment for sin.

God never punishes His children. He chastens us and He purges us, but He does not punish us. All of our punishment was given to Jesus when He was on the cross. There are often some difficult times of chastening for God's people, but it is all for the purpose of getting us where we need to be.

Psalm 119:66-68

⁶⁶ Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

⁶⁸ Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

We see this in action in Jonah's life.

Jonah 1:1-5

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

² Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

³ But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

⁴ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

⁶ So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

⁷ And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

Jonah's chastening included a great wind and a downward spiritual spiral, and the shame of his sin being exposed.

But let us get to the unbeliever. Our "fiery" trials are for the purpose of shaping us but when the unbeliever dies, he or she will face the "fiery" judgment of God's wrath because of their sin.

Revelation 20:11-15

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The unbelievers will NOT escape this judgment without coming to Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:27

²⁷ And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Even we who are believers will stand in judgment before the Lord.

1 Corinthians 3:11-13

¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

⁹ Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Notice 1 Peter 4:18

The word "scarcely" means "with difficulty." The idea here is NOT that we are barely saved and plucked from the fire. The idea is that the life of the believer as he or she endures the purifying fires, is difficult. We can see this in the Words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The word "NARROW" means "to press hard." The idea is that the path we are called to walk, is a path on which we are pressed hard. Grapes are pressed hard to get the juice and in the same way we are pressed hard to bring out the best in us which is the life of Jesus Christ. Back to Peter's question.

Notice 1 Peter 4:18 again.

If the purifying process is this painful for us who are believers how bad will it be for unbelievers who stand at the Great White throne Judgment?

The overall idea that Peter has here is that whatever we go through as believers, however painful the path may be, we know that the best is yet to come. This life is as terrible as it will get for us.

Revelation 21:1-5

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

² *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

³ *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

⁴ *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

⁵ *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

Notice 1 Peter 4:19

Here is a verse that we need to look closely at. Let us notice 3 points here:

1. Sometimes it is the will of God for us to suffer.

Suffering in the will of God is not suffering for doing that which is wrong.

2. We are to commit our souls to God for safe keeping.

The word commit has the idea of depositing money in a very safe place knowing that it would be returned one day. We are to deposit our souls with the Lord. We are to surrender our souls to Him knowing that He will keep us eternally safe.

1 Peter 1:4-5

⁴ *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

⁵ **Who are kept by the power of God** *through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

3. We are to see God as a FAITHFUL CREATOR.

This is where we cause ourselves much stress and worry that is needless. When we stress out over what we are facing then we are not trusting in the Lord. The lack of faith brings on worry and stress.

Conclusion:

Notice the words of Josh Billings:

"Life is a grindstone, and whether it grinds a man down or polishes him up depends on the stuff he's made of." I think this accurately portrays the path of each man or woman's life. As the grinding edge of undeserved suffering makes close contact with our lives, our response will cause us to become either a more polished vessel (i.e., Christlike), or else it will mar us with a deeper root of bitterness. In short, we will either become holy or bitter, depending on our response to undeserved suffering. And so we are told that those who suffer "according to the will of God" are not to be resentful but rather are to "commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."