

I P E T E R

How Does God Shape His People?

Trinity Dallas Study Notes

1 Peter: How Does God Shape His People? Part Five – 1 Peter, Chapter 4: Why Suffering?

1 Peter can be divided into three sections:

1. Salvation – 1 Peter 1:1-2:10
2. Submission – 1 Peter 2:11-3:12
3. Suffering – 1 Peter 3:13-5:14

Introduction & Theme

All Christians will suffer. Peter is constructing for us an understanding of suffering with Christ's life as our example. Christ suffered not because of sin, bad choices, or poor financial decisions. He suffered unjustly because he did his father's will. He suffered because he brought a Kingdom of righteousness to earthly unrighteousness.

- Christ's suffering is our model
- When we get involved with the Christ project of bringing heaven to earth, we will experience suffering

Why Suffering?

- Personally
 - Suffering advances the progress of sanctification
 - Suffering exposes pride
 - Suffering purifies priorities: Kingdom life over self-fulfillment
- Corporately
 - Suffering has a cleansing effect on the house of God, the church
 - When we pursue godliness, despite suffering, growth is accelerated

God uses suffering to shape us in His image

1 Peter 4 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ² As a result, they do

not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ **Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.**

Verse 8 is the Kingdom Key in 1 Peter Chapter 4

⁸ Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love makes up for many of your faults. (TLB)

⁸ Above all, have fervent *and* unending love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins [it overlooks unkindness and unselfishly seeks the best for others]. (AMP)

Where did Peter get this deep love, fervent & unending love for people?

- There is a story here that needs to be told. It happens between John 18, Peter's denial & John 21, The Miraculous Catch.
- Jesus' question to Peter in John 21:15 - "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than **these**?"
- **To what does the word "these" refer?**
 - Perhaps Jesus was referring to the other disciples. "Lord, if they all fail you, I never will," Peter had said earlier. **Peter's Pride**
 - Maybe Jesus was pointing toward the catch of 153 fish. Which for Peter would have represented success, wealth, and status. **Peter's Priority**
 - Maybe Peter (like us) had both a **Pride Problem** and **Priorities Problem**
 - Jesus asked this question to the man who denied him 3 times. Because before Peter's denial Jesus prophesied:
 - **Luke 22:31-32** - ³¹ "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. **And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.**"

- In other words, Jesus tells Peter that when your **Pride** and **Priorities** are purified, turn back and help others

Peter's story between his denial in John 18 and the Miraculous Catch in John 21:

- Peter witnessed the crucifixion - John 19
- Peter had seen the empty tomb - John 20:6
- Peter saw and spoke with Jesus in his resurrection body - John 20:19
- Peter was there when Jesus "breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." - John 20:22
- Peter was in the locked room when Jesus appeared and asked Thomas to put his fingers in his wounds. - John 20:27
- Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples... John 20:30
- "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. John 21:3
 - **His denial was festering in his soul, he was suffering under the weight of his failure.** So, he goes back to the beginning, back to what he can do with his own strength and skill.
 - We do the same thing, sin causes us to self-diagnose, to isolate, to go inward. To trust in what we can do. **Peter went back to self-sufficiency.**

When, in our suffering, we encounter Christ's love, pride is exposed and priorities are purified.

- Pride looks down on others and elevates the self.
- Priorities (career, success, wealth...) that satisfy only the self must be purified to a place of dependence on the Father.

⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms

 - We are to serve others based on the spiritual gift we have received
 - When I was a kid a few full-service gas stations still existed. You would pull your car in, the attendants would not only fill the car with gas, but check all the fluids, battery, and fill all the tires with air.
 - Unfortunately, many attend church like a self-service station. They fill up on preaching, prayer, and maybe some ministry and go home until they need some more fuel.

- But God intends his church to be full service with each member providing for the well-being of others.

¹¹ *If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.* ¹² *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.* ¹³ *But rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.* ¹⁴ *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, **you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.***

- Peter declares that in unjust suffering glory rests upon us.
- The biblical definition of “glory” is understood best in the Hebrew word *chabod*, which means “weighty” or “substantial.”
- Adam and Eve were originally clothed with this glory—the weight of the reality of God. When they sinned the *chabod* departed, leaving them empty and exposed (Genesis 3:7).

¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian (one of three times the word Christian is used in NT), do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And,

“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Conclusion:

Luke 22:31-32

³¹ *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

- Peter was suffering, Satan was sifting him like wheat. In Peter’s suffering Jesus takes two actions:
 1. Jesus prayed for Peter
 2. In the timing of heaven Jesus asked Peter the question, “do you truly love me more than **these?**” John 21:15

- Peter's suffering exposed pride and purified priorities, thereby shaping Peter in God's image. So that he could strengthen others.
- **God uses suffering to shape us in His image so that we can minister to others.**

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think God uses suffering to reveal your priorities?
2. What are some examples of how God has allowed suffering to reveal your priorities?
3. Through your actions, how can you reveal your priorities before you go through suffering?