

# Peter and His Epistles

## Lesson # 12: Suffering Part 1

### I. Introduction: Peter's comments on suffering (1 Peter 4:1-5:11)

- A. Notice that Christ suffered as our example (4:1, 4:13)
- B. Don't be surprised when you suffer (4:1, 4:12-19)
- C. Make sure and minister to those who suffer (5:1-9)
- D. Remember, suffering has a purpose (5:10-11)

"...Pain is a bruising of a blessing, but it is a blessing nevertheless. It's a strange, dark companion but a companion – if only because it has passed through God's respecting hand. It's an unwelcome guest, but still a guest. I know that it drives me to a nearer, more intimate place of fellowship with Jesus and so I take pain as though I were taking the left hand of God. (Better the left hand than no hand at all).

Perhaps the simple realization of something so redemptive is healing enough."

(A Place of Healing, by Joni Erickson Tada)

**Definition of suffering:** "to be affected by something from without, to be acted upon, to undergo an experience, to be subjected to evil." (Word Dictionary, p. 1129)

Suffering is anything that hurts or irritates.

### II. Nature of suffering as noted in 1 Peter:

- A. Distressed (1:6-7), slandered (2:12), insulted (3:9), harmed (3:13), reviled (4:14), suffered as Christian (4:16), suffered as part of God's will (4:19) and suffered temporarily (5:10).
- B. In general it is: painful, perplexing (causes us to ask why), a process (Rom. 5:3-4), a purifier (Phil. 3:12-14), pre-determined (1 Pet. 1:6, 4:12) and inevitable (1 Thes. 3:3)

### III. Causes of suffering:

- A. It's the natural repercussion of living in a fallen world (See Gen. 3:15-19)
- B. It is the result of the "sowing and reaping" principle (see Gal. 6:7-9)
- C. It's a form of God's discipline for his "kids" (See Heb. 12:6 and Prov. 3:11-12)
- D. It may be persecution because of our faith (See 2 Tim. 3:12)
- E. We may never know the cause

Isa. 55:8-9 "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

#### **IV. So what? Consider an incredible biblical example: Jeremiah (Heb. 12:1-3)**

- A. Jeremiah was not allowed to have a family (Jer. 16:1-2)  
When relationships fail you...you're lonely and hurt: Look away to Jesus, let your vision be filled with Him.
- B. Jeremiah got so depressed, he bitterly wishes he had never been born (Jeremiah 15:10, 20:4-18).  
When discouragement becomes depression: Look away to Jesus, let your vision be filled with Him.
- C. Jeremiah had a broken heart for those to whom he ministered (Jeremiah 13:17).  
When those you love reject your Savior (and maybe you), look away to Jesus. Let your vision be filled with Him.
- D. Jeremiah was misunderstood, to the point of a sentence of death (Jeremiah 26:7-24)  
When you are misunderstood, falsely accused, not listened to or threatened emotionally or physically, look away to Jesus, let your vision be filled with Him.
- E. Jeremiah was imprisoned for his ministry and yet in the midst of his darkest hour, God gave him a promise: Nothing is too difficult for me! (Jeremiah 32:1-44)  
In the midst of your darkest hours (physically, emotionally, financially or whatever), you too, need to remember to look away to Jesus, because nothing is too difficult for Him!

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#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Peter has much to say about suffering. What events in his own life gave him perspective on this topic?
2. If you are experiencing some suffering right now, what do you think is the cause? Why do you think that?