

MORE ON MISSION SERMON NOTES - STEPHEN TIBBERTS

SERMON- Sunday 10th November 2024 am

TITLE: "Trials of fire and unmeasured grace" TEXT: 1 Peter 4 v 7-19

Scripture references from the ESV

1 Peter 4: 7-19 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory^[b] and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgement to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Those who are committed to walking with God in this life will experience painful trials, but we know that, in the midst of whatever pain, confusion or opposition comes our way, God is still in control and he understands and is with us in our time of need. Peter reminds us of all of this, and puts forward practical ways for us to respond as we suffer for the sake of the gospel.

This letter was written to encourage believers because of severe trials that were affecting the church. During the time of the Roman Emperor Nero, persecution was severe and daily life for Christians became a struggle.

It was a time of real difficulty purely because of the connection with Jesus Christ. There are many places in the world today in the same situation. The whole letter can be summed up in these words from 1 Peter 5:10-11:

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

We are reminded that there is something coming in the future which will far outweigh anything we face today. We need to fix our eyes on Christ, **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2)**. His suffering brought victory over sin, destroying the power of sin in the life of the believer. Those who have made a choice to live by godly principles are willing to suffer physically now, having eternity in view.

All through the letter, Peter calls his readers to take an eternal perspective. As we draw closer to the time of Christ's return, we have a greater need to be careful how we live. Peter gives practical advice to the suffering church on how to prepare for the end of all things, basing his motivation on the realities of glorification and what God has promised to do.

As a corporate response, we need to:

- 1. Be alert and sober minded in prayer (v7).** Prayer demonstrates an attitude of living in dependence on God. When we are alert and sober minded, we will pray effectively and thoughtfully, directed by the Word. We need to think clearly about heavenly realities and not allow ourselves to be distracted by current circumstances.
- 2. Love deeply (v8).** In the midst of persecution, we need one another. Love is willing to forgive again and again
- 3. Be hospitable (v9).** We are part of a family as children of our heavenly Father, and this is a very practical piece of advice for those experiencing pressure from those outside the faith. In doing this, our true identity shows through. The early church became noted for its care, not only of Christians, but also of strangers and especially the needy. Care for others could be burdensome at times, but Peter calls on believers to offer hospitality without grumbling.

4. Serve one another (v10). Our trials may be varied but so are the gifts God has given us. Each believer has been engifted by God and the purpose of those gifts is to serve one another and not ourselves. Two are mentioned (speaking and serving), but both depend on God. Used for his purposes, God will be glorified and the church will be built up. We are to be good stewards of God's varied grace. In its various forms, that grace is shown to the church, his body. One of the ways he has done that is by gifting us for service to each other.

Times of hardship are precisely when we need to be yielding ourselves and our gifting to the control of the Spirit for the good of the body.

In the face of suffering, God's family offer vital support through prayer, loving and serving one another and offering hospitality

Sharing in the sufferings of Christ (vv12-19):

Suffering for wrongdoing produces shame but it is a cause for rejoicing when we suffer as Christ's representatives. We become like him as we experience trials. God uses these times to strengthen our faith in him and to assure us that he is interested in us and involved in our lives. Our commitment to glorify God becomes even deeper as our dependence on him grows stronger.

On an individual level:

5. Do not be surprised at the fiery trial (v12). Peter has a concern to ensure that we think rightly about all that happens. To think rightly about suffering, we need to understand that it is not a strange thing to suffer. We should not be surprised. Peter was anticipating a terrible period of trial, echoing the words of Christ: **'A servant is not greater than his master.'** If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ **But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.** (John 15:20-21). As we live Christlike lives in a godless world, the godless world will treat us as it treated Christ.

6. Rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ (v13). We can rejoice in our suffering, because we are being identified with Christ. We are not sharing in his suffering for sin. Christ's sacrifice was completely sufficient. Our suffering, when it comes because we are living godly lives for Christ no matter what the cost to us

personally, unites us to his purposes and his plan. We share in his suffering, but we know that we will also share in his glory. **If we have died with him, we will also live with him;¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; (2Tim 2:12).**

Persecution is evidence that God is with you (v14). The one who suffers for the name of Christ is blessed. In contrast, the unbelievers in the world who are judging Christians now will face a terrible judgement (vv17-18).

7. **Do not be ashamed (v16).** Rather, seek to glorify God in whatever you are experiencing.
8. **Praise God that you bear his name (v16).** The word Christian marked out followers of Christ, but had also become a derisive name. To glorify God in that name is to live in accordance with all it stood for. **I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Ephesians 4:1).** We are so easily influenced by the world's evaluation of what is good and right. Take care not to adopt the world's standards so that you end up feeling ashamed of righteousness and goodness. Day to day living is difficult. That is why we need our brothers and sisters, and why we can thank God for them.
9. **Entrust yourself to your faithful Creator (v19).** We are to continue to put our lives in the hands of God. He has called us to be his ambassadors and it is his world, his plan and his truth.
10. **Continue to do good (v19).** To suffer according to God's will was to suffer as a result of living and doing as God wants his children to do. As they lived righteously, they faced grave danger physically, but their eternal safety was secure in God's hands. The future is God's responsibility. Their responsibility was simply to continue to do good. In using the word Creator in this verse, Peter reminds us of God's ultimate design and purpose. He is the one who brought this world into existence by his very word.

**Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,
casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)**

In times of difficulty, let us cling to what is real. Trials are part of our Christian experience, but God knows and understands. He is with us.

- Be clear-thinking and remind yourself of Biblical truth.
- Feed your soul with the promises of God.
- Remind yourself of God's presence with you, his care, his grace and his favour on your behalf because of Christ.
- Christ is enough. His promises are sure, and it will all be worth it when we see Jesus!

**But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)**