

March 10, 2024
Trials for the Church
The Church in the World Series

Text: Selected Scripture in 1 Peter

Introduction: Show video from Open Doors:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZe3oVZUifw>

Life as a persecuted Christian in North Korea: Bae's story

Bae's story is but one of very many in our world, and it was a story playing out in the early days of the Church. Peter wrote his first letter to encourage Christians suffering for their faith.

I need to tell you a story as we begin concerning sermon prep. Believe it or not, most pastors really hope that some of what they share will be remembered by their congregants. We attempt to build our message using words that will stick.

This morning we are talking about suffering in the church. What came to my mind right away was the certainty of suffering. Jesus told His disciples that *in this world they would have tribulations*. I then thought we should consider what attitudes we should have, as Christians, as we meet with these struggles.

Well, using the word *attitude*, I thought of the word *certitude*, which means absolute certainty or conviction that something is the case. I thought, *I can use this rhyming thing Sunday, but will I find a word that ends with -tude for my third point?* And I did...

Vicissitudes ~ Losing a pet, crashing the car, being called in for jury duty: these are examples of vicissitudes — chapters in one's life that one would rather avoid but must get through. Some lives have more vicissitudes than others, to be sure, but no life is without events that test and challenge us.

So now you know a little more of the story behind my study than you probably wanted to know. You will hopefully see how all this plays into our Scripture study this morning.

Trials for the Church

I. Vicissitudes in the Christian Life. 1 Peter 1:6-7

Reasons for these Seasons of Suffering ~

- To test the genuineness of one's faith.
- To bring glory to God.

Indeed, it is the honor of faith to be tried. Shall any man say, 'I have faith, but I have never had to believe under difficulties?' Who knows whether thou hast any faith? Shall a man say, 'I have great faith in God, but I have never had to use it in anything more than the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done without it as well as with it?' Is this to the honor and praise of thy faith? Dost thou think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to thee any great reward? If so, thou art mightily mistaken. Spurgeon

Gold is one of the most durable of metals. It is purified with fire, allowing the dross to separate and be burned away. In a similar way, trials have a way of testing our faith, confirming our sincerity, strengthening our faith, and leaving us with a purer faith.

II. The Certitude of Suffering for Christians. 1 Peter 2:11-12
When they speak against you... See also 1 Peter 5:9b.

Christians were falsely accused of great crimes in the early church.

- Christians were accused of cannibalism when they spoke of eating the flesh and drinking blood in their communion services.
- Agape feasts were thought to be wild orgies.
- Christians were considered antisocial because they did not participate in society's immoral entertainment.
- Christians were labeled *atheists* because they did not worship idols.

III. Some Healthy Attitudes for Christians when Confronted with Suffering.

A. *Let me be like Jesus.* 1 Peter 2:18-23

- Suffering for doing good.

Christ's life was spent doing good for others, yet accusations and rebuffs were cast at Him:

- Jesus welcomed all people to Himself but was condemned by the religious leaders for eating with tax collectors and sinners. Matthew 9:9-12
- Accused by the Pharisees of casting out demons with demonic powers. Matthew 9:32-34
- Healed a withered hand on the Sabbath and garnered animosity with the Pharisees. Matthew 12:9-14
- Similar abuse when He healed the crippled woman. Luke 13:10-17
- Jesus brought His friend Lazarus back from the dead which intensified the Pharisee's hatred toward Him. John 11

Jesus has left an example – the word used literally means *writing under*. He gave us a bold example that we can trace.

- Suffering on the cross for our sins. **1 Peter 3:18; 4:1**

The ultimate suffering is death – Jesus suffered a cruel punishment He did not deserve (He was the just who died for the unjust), but His resurrection guarantees ours.

B. *Let me conform to His Word.* **1 Peter 3:8-9**

Several Paradoxes in the Christian Life ~

- Blessing follows suffering for living righteously. **1 Peter 3:13-17**

Rhetorical question – *Who will harm you if you are zealous to do good?*

If (since?) you do suffer or will suffer, you are blessed.

Verse 15 ~ Set apart Christ as Lord in your heart.
Be ready to testify before men. (Be bold, prepared)
Always check your motives and spirit.

- Joy follows suffering for being a Christian. **1 Peter 4:12-19**

Peter once told Jesus to avoid the suffering of the cross (Mark 8:32-33). “Once it seemed strange to the Apostle Peter that his Master should think of suffering. Now he thinks it strange that He could have imagined anything else.”
(Meyer)

- We can rejoice because as we share in His sufferings, we will also share in His glory. v. 12-13
- Suffering as a Christian is not cause to be ashamed, but rather reason to glory in Him. v. 16
- A Christian's suffering is small in perspective to the wrath and judgment that awaits those who reject God. v. 17-18
- Our faithful Creator can be trusted. v. 19
- Steadfast faith follows battles with Satan. **1 Peter 5:8-10**

Satan roars through persecution, strong temptation, and through blasphemies and accusations against God. v. 8

Satan's battleplan is set.

He can never be content till he sees the believer utterly devoured. He would rend him in pieces and break his bones and utterly destroy him if he could. Do not, therefore, indulge the thought, that the main purpose of Satan is to make you miserable. He is pleased with that, but that is not his ultimate end. Sometimes he may even make you happy, for he hath dainty poisons sweet to the taste which he administers to God's people. If he feels that our destruction can be more readily achieved by sweets than by bitters, he certainly would prefer that which would best effect his end.

Spurgeon

After these battles Peter prayed that God would solidify and strengthen the Christians' faith. v. 10

Perfect – fit together perfectly the church.

Establish – unify them.

Strengthen – give them additional spiritual power.

Settle them – place them on a firm foundation.

So What? Triumphant through Persecution - MacArthur, p. 1947

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| 1. Expect it. | 2. Rejoice in it. |
| 3. Evaluate its cause. | 4. Entrust it to God. |

Questions to Ponder Through the Week
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1. Name some trials all people seem to face at some point in their lifetimes. Have you suffered through any vicissitudes in your life for your Christian faith? What helped you get through these rough times? How was your faith impacted? Do you think all Christians should expect these trying times? Explain your reasoning.
2. The early church suffered many things because they were misunderstood. Is the evangelical church misunderstood today? If so, in what ways? What could or should we do to help the lost world understand who we are and what we believe? Is there evidence that animosity exists because of misunderstanding or is it more an underlining hatred for Jesus and what is good?
3. A true disciple of Jesus wants to be more like Him every day. What characteristic would you like to emulate more in your life and what steps can you take to become like Him in this way? Could this change foster resentment from people in your life?

4. Read 1 Peter 3:15 in several translations and paraphrases if possible. What does it look like to set apart Christ as Lord in one's life? What can you do to be prepared to share your faith with others? How will you know if your motives are pure?

5. Read 1 Peter 5:8-10. Describe what Satan's attacks might look like. Do spiritual attacks look different than the everyday struggles of life in this fallen world? What can you do to prepare for his attacks? How does warfare make one's faith stronger?

Sermon Topic for March 10:

Would the True Church Please Stand Up? 1 Peter

It is obvious in our world today that people have a variety of ideas of what the Church should be like – how it should function, what it should prioritize, what its worship should be like. Peter painted a picture of the Church for his suffering children. How does he describe the true church in this letter?