

1 Peter 4

Suffering for a Good Cause

Read 1 Peter 4:1-6: Peter returns to his original topic of *suffering for a good cause*. Otherwise stated; we were made to live life with a purpose. Serving others is not an inconvenience. We need a little *heavenly sandpaper* to smooth out our rough spots. He uses Jesus (our prime example) to illustrate a little bit more about the benefits of the trials that accompany ministry. Peter tells us to arm ourselves with *the mind of Christ*. Where is our focus and attention?

Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, (Luke 9:51)

There is a process that takes place when you go towards something. You just unknowingly stop going towards all of the other competing things.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. (Matthew 6:24)

To live on as a natural man (only for our own benefit) is compared to remaining in a limited state. A wheat plant has just one life; unless it is buried at maturity. One wheat plant life lived as a sacrifice can result in 30-60 new wheat plants. The purpose of a planted wheat field is for it to mature and then die. If it does not die; then it yields no bread or sustenance for others. If we live for ourselves, we will be only singular and lonely. Wheat that keeps itself alive, lives alone, and others are not strengthened or have a chance at that same life..





Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. (John 12:24)



We have to die to our old ways to graduate to the spiritual life. Jesus came to die, so that we could live. The Bible tells us that without blood (death) there is no remission of sins.

knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:18-21)

Our legacy comes from pouring ourselves into the lives of others; not from personal greatness.

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:36-38)



Read 1 Peter 4:7-11: We, on the other hand, were not born to be slain lambs. That was only Jesus. We are what is called ‘living sacrifices’. We all have been given gifts to share. Some plant, some water, some cultivate, some train, and some harvest. Peter talks about speakers, and also about those who minister to others, etc... Having unharvested fields is not a good reflection on us. At some point in the near future our opportunity to use these skills and tools will be gone. Peter is telling us to put our tools to work right now.

The hard part is keeping this mind set of blessing people amidst our daily distractions. We have a lot of reasons not to like some people, or some situations. We find ourselves in numerous predicaments that pit us against each other. There are things to grumble about every day. It is like we are carrying grace into unfriendly situations. Keeping that spiritual life active in the midst of an unspiritual world makes it true grace and love. We are injecting something completely different into a rotten situation. We should feel like foreigners at times.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19: Christian living can be a surreal experience. Sometimes it feels like we are separated and just observing our own lives in this lost society. The famous book Pilgrims Progress is all about a man who leaves the *City of Destruction* and embarks on a journey of faith. He encounters some strange people along the way. God gives us a spiritual mind to see the strangeness of the habits of men on earth. It can feel lonely for a moment to see crowds gathering at events, and so much thought devoted to things like Monday night football. It is not that we cannot appreciate the same things; but we see it as just a momentary distraction.

We do not control who walks through our front door. We do not control our assignments and doors that open and close. We do control our reactions and how we deal with the opportunities at hand. God is crafting our faith. That involves a continuous burning off of accumulated trash. We are like *balls of velcro* rolling through the earth, that pick up all kinds of nasty trash. It comes flooding into our eye gates, and our ear gates. Sometimes situations revolve, and we become the bad guy without even knowing it.

It is like the Green Eggs and Ham book by Dr. Seuss. We are continuously presented with options that do not seem attractive. We still are required to make a decision. We are forced to participate in one way or another. It is probably easiest to stop trying to make life on earth the way we want it. It is not our end point. It is more about a process. How can we glorify God with what is right in front of us?

I really feel like God is telling us that not only is this world a place of dead ends and broken ideas. It is supposed to be this way to re-develop our character. We hate suffering. We repel what causes it. There are some things about ourselves that we do not like letting go of. It is easier to leave bad company if that bad company rejects your beliefs.