

59. Jesus in 1 Peter

April 19, 2018

Though each of us is very different in personality, most of us are similar in one area. When it comes to remembering other people, we usually remember their wrongs, while we quickly forget the good things they've done. You think I am wrong? Let's go through a few biblical characters and see what we think of them:

1) Jonah – You think of him as the man in the belly of a big fish, because he was running away from God's call to his enemy city, Nineveh. But we don't think of him as the evangelist who preached to a half million people and they all turned away from their wicked ways and became followers of God.

2) Samson – I know what you are thinking. When you think about Samson, you immediately think about his superman strength as well as a lustful and undisciplined desire. But do we know him as a ruler of Israel for over 20 years with a flawless record?

3) Rehab – A street lady, hooker, madam, or a prostitute of Jericho. How come we don't think of her as the great-great-grandmother of king David in the Messianic lineage mentioned in Matthew?

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

So when we think of Peter, we think of his three denials of Jesus. He has a foot-shaped mouth, because he often inserted his foot in his mouth and took it out just long enough to exchange it with the other foot. A Jewish historian Josephus described about the Galileans: "They were ever fond of innovations, and by nature disposed to changes... They were ever ready to follow a leader and to begin an insurrection. They have never been destitute of courage." The Talmud says of the Galileans: "They were ever more anxious for honor than gain. Quick tempered, impulsive, emotional, easily roused by an appeal to adventure and loyal to the end." In other words, Peter was a typical man of Galilee.

Peter was considered as the leader among the disciples of Jesus. He even made the climactic confession of Christ as Messiah.

Matthew 16:13-16 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"
14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

As the first 12 chapters of Acts indicate, Peter became a major moving force in the formation of the early church. Peter was considered as the most powerful figure in the Christian community and as the first pope by Catholic people.

Peter is the author of two of the most wonderful letters of compassion, hope, and encouragement in all the NT.

We all have chapters in our lives we wish we could erase and nobody noticed. We might even wish that we could change their opinions about us. However, two truths remain:

1) If it hadn't been for those chapters in our lives, we would most likely be very proud people.

Some of us would not pay attention to God at all. God had to take us down to the lowest level, so that He could get our attention.

2) If we didn't go through those trials, we really wouldn't have grown in maturity or gained depth of character.

I find myself growing more in the Lord and moving me closer to God, while I went through the trials and tests. Those times of suffering build us and mold us more and more into conformity to Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter wrote this letter to a group of Christians scattered throughout the northern areas of Asia Minor, where he may have previously preached the Gospel.

The group of people he was writing to probably included both Jews and Gentiles. The apostle addressed the letter's recipients as "aliens" in v1, a word indicating that Peter was speaking not just to Jews or just to Gentiles but to Christians who were living their lives in such a way that they would have stood out as aliens among the surrounding culture.

Based on the numerous references to suffering and persecution in this letter, Peter likely wrote in AD 64, just as the persecution of Christians under Nero was ramping up.

B. THE THEME OF 1 PETER – HOPE

Mankind cannot live without hope in this world. It has been said that a man can live without food for forty days, four days without water, four minutes without oxygen, but only four seconds without any hope in his heart. Hope is much brighter when we are in the midst of dark despair and discouragement. When we face trials and tests in our lives, some of us more than others, the trials and tests can dismantle our courage and fight in us.

Peter understood about hope in Christ Jesus. Jesus didn't write off Peter, because he denied Jesus three times. Jesus restored him three times. With the painful lesson that Peter would never forget, the hope in God is not another Christian concept to him, but it is the very one holding Peter in the place. We have a living hope through Christ's resurrection; a calm hope through personal submission to God; and a firm hope through faith in God.

1 Peter might be called the Job of the NT, providing encouragement for the true believer to continue on in the way that Jesus has laid out for all His followers. The endurance Peter called these believers to is similar to Job's, a man who suffered despite his righteousness. Peter maintained that this was the kind of true perseverance that God expects from His people.

C. THE EPISTLE FROM PETER

Peter starts his letter with "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ". He doesn't start with his ugly past. It was as if he were thinking, "I'll start right where I am." He was not dwelling in the past, since he couldn't change it. He knows that he can do all things God gives him to do with God's power. How about you? Are you dwelling on what you did? Are you letting your past eat you alive? Are you muddling in your past despair? Sometimes all too clearly and painfully we see our own inadequacies, but we must also, with equal clarity, call to mind Jesus Christ's sufficiency to touch us with His grace. Our insufficiency is covered and replaced with Jesus' sufficiency.

Mark 10:27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

What does Peter say to someone facing a trial? We can find four points from 1 Peter:

1) Trials may vary, but we are valuable to God.

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Trials produce grief to everyone, however, the intensity varies by how an individual takes it. God thinks that we are more valuable than gold to Him. So He is refining our lives through fire of trials and reshape us from the inside out.

2) The tests God brings may seem unreasonable and unexplainable, but God has His reason for allowing them in our lives.

1 Peter 2:18-20 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

In many times of our trials, we cannot understand why God is allowing these trials to come our way or what He is doing in our lives with these trials. He does not owe us an explanation, but we owe Him obedience. Jesus never promised that the Christian walk is easy. The only easy thing He promised is His yoke and burden:

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

3) Trials are inevitable.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

While we are living on this earth in these human bodies, trials and tests cannot be avoided. Ever since the first human fell into sin, the whole earth is under the curse of sin. To set us free from the curse of sin that results in eternal death, the Son of God Himself took our sins. While we still go through this pain of trials, we are sharing His sufferings of Christ as a way of participating in Christ's glory.

Philippians 3:10-11 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

4) Trials are temporal, not eternal.

1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

Yes, trials are horrendously difficult to endure, but the day of restoration is coming! We have reason to hope, whatever our circumstances are. Someday we will see His glorious face with full of joy. Jesus Himself will give us our eternal reward.

Unjust or unforeseen suffering is one of the great problems that grips the hearts of people today. We struggle with frustration, anger, and uncertainty when trials strangely and unexpectedly land on our doorsteps. Too often in those most difficult moments of our lives, confusion reigns while contentment wanes; questions arise while prayer subsides.

How do we react when suffering comes? Many crumble at the mere thought of another pain or trial. Others rise to the occasion. Most of us are probably somewhere in between. Peter's encouragement to his Christian readers is one of perseverance in faith. It isn't enough for us to simply get up every morning and trudge through each day; neither is it advisable to paste a smile on our faces and ignore troubles. Instead, the lesson of 1 Peter is to push through the troubles, recognizing their temporary presence in our lives while walking in holiness and hope as people of faith.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Failure in the past should not nullify the purpose in the future.

Even though we feel tempted to throw a towel and give up, we need to reach up and grab the Hands of God to get up again.

2) A broken heart is great preparation for healing other fractured lives.

We can be used by God to help others who are in the same situation like we were.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

3) A word of encouragement of hope brings more precious and valuable help than a thousand thoughts never expressed.

Peter didn't just pray for those who suffered, he wrote to them a letter of encouragement that we can study and learn. Reach out and touch someone by the power of God!