

Getting Started

*“Every Christian who lives a godly life experiences a certain amount of persecution. On the job, in school, in the neighborhood, perhaps even in the family, there are people who resist the truth and oppose the gospel of Christ. No matter what a believer says or does, these people find fault and criticize. Peter dealt with this kind of ‘normal persecution’ in the previous part of his letter. But in this section, Peter explained about a special kind of persecution, a ‘fiery ordeal’, that was about to overtake the entire church. It would not be from those around them, but official persecution from those above them. Thus far Christianity had been tolerated by Rome because it was considered a ‘sect’ of Judaism, and the Jews were permitted to worship freely. That attitude would change and the fires of persecution would be ignited, first by Nero, and then by the emperors that followed.” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Hopeful, 1 Peter*)*

- Start your group time in prayer to be watchful, self-controlled, and sober-minded considering 1 Peter 4:12-19.

Discussion

- Pastor Lee shared various root causes for suffering in our lives. Discuss examples of each of these that you have experienced.
 - Broken world infected by sin (resulting in disease, sickness, natural disasters, death, etc.)
 - Self-inflicted wounds due to our sinful choices
 - Living a godly life as a follower of Christ

- Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And,

“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

- Discuss what you observe in this passage about God's character, Sin, Salvation, Promises to claim, Commands to obey.
 - God's character
 - Sin
 - Salvation
 - Promises to claim
 - Commands to obey

"1 Peter 4:17-18 speaks not about condemnation for the believer, but the purging, chastening, and purifying of the church by the loving hand of God. It is far better and more important to kingdom work to endure suffering as the Lord purges and strengthens the church, than to endure the eternal sufferings of the unbeliever in the lake of fire. And, if God so strongly and painfully judges His church that He loves, what will be His fury on the ungodly?" (John MacArthur)

- How does the truth of verses 17+18 affect your sense of urgency regarding the need for prayerful and intentional evangelism?

Prayer

In summary there are at least 4 instructions for us to follow considering the coming "fiery trial". Ask God to prepare and strengthen you in the area(s) that are most needed for you and the church.

1. Expect Suffering (4:12)
2. Rejoice in Suffering (4:13-14)
 - a. Our suffering means fellowship with Christ
 - b. Our suffering means glory in the future
 - c. Our suffering brings to us the ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - d. Our suffering enables us to glorify His name
3. Examine your life (4:15-18)
 - a. Why am I suffering?
 - b. Am I ashamed or glorifying Christ?
 - c. Am I seeking to win the lost?
4. Commit yourself to God (4:19)