

PP Alien Invasion: We Come in Peace

Part 3-1 Peter 3:8-18

4/23-24, 2016

The Roman Emperor Nero was looking to put the apostle Peter to death, but the Christians begged and persuaded him to flee the city of Rome and escape the plans of Nero. Tradition says that on his way to safety he came to a gate, where he saw a vision of Jesus Christ, and he asked Him, 'Lord, where are You going?' to which he heard Jesus say, 'I am on My way again to be crucified'. Peter understood the message, returned to the city, submitted courageously to what would come.

PP *"There is a great want [something lacking] about all Christians who have not suffered. Some flowers must be broken or bruised before they emit any fragrance"* R.M. McCheyne
Christian, the suffering that we will face in this life is multi-faceted.

PP *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed [have no way out], but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed"*
2 Corinthians 4:8-9

We live in a world marred by sin and brokenness and suffering is common to all. Yet the suffering in mind in this message is unjust suffering, persecution, which comes to a Christian when they live as spiritual lights in a morally darkening world. Remember again our memory verses for this series:

PP *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles ['Aliens and strangers'-NASB] to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."* **1 Peter 2:11-12**

The unbelieving world will speak against us as evildoers, let us live well and bring God glory.

PP *"To be right with God has often meant to be in trouble with men."* AW Tozer

Some here have been rejected by family when they left the family's religion or denomination. Some have lost friends, or boyfriends because they began to live after Jesus Christ. Others are taking job risks because they want to begin bible studies before work, or on break. In Peter's day, persecution was beginning to escalate, something made crystal clear in his letter.

PP *"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials"* **1 Peter 1:6**

PP *"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps."* **1 Peter 2:21**

PP *"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin"* **1 Peter 4:1**

PP *"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."* **1 Peter 4:12**

PP *"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name...Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."* **1 Peter 4:16, 19**

PP Elders, *"Resist [Satan], firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by you brotherhood throughout the world."* **1 Peter 5:9**

It was around AD 64 and Peter is writing to Christians all over Rome (**1:1**)

On July 19-27th AD 64, a massive fire raged in the city of Rome, devouring the tightly bunched wooden tenements, destroying 10 of the city's 14 quarters
 Nero wanted to remake Rome, and rumor swept through the city that he started the fire
 Accounts say he watched the fires burn with maniacal glee, as Roman troops prevented people from extinguishing the fires, and even starting new ones, guaranteeing the devastation
 Resented by the public, Nero diverted the blame toward the Christian community, which was already largely viewed with hatred by many in the Roman Empire
 Christians were accused of eating human flesh and drinking blood during the Lord's Supper
 That the Holy Kiss, a greeting of the early church, was a gesture of rampant lust
 It was common that Roman women came to Christ and their husbands didn't (3:1), so Christians were accused of dividing the family
 With little difficulty, Nero turned Rome's wrath toward the Christians punishing them severely
 He rounded up Christians, put them on poles and burned them at night to light his garden parties
 He had them sewn alive inside animal skins and devoured by wild beasts, others crucified
PP Against this backdrop, Peter prepared the early church for unjust suffering

PP 1-Knowing who we are as Christians gives us a powerful anchor in unjust suffering

"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing...For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."
1 Peter 3:8-9, 12

The preparation for persecution begins by learning to live in redemptive community
"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind."
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These are each and all vital and indispensable ingredients for Christian community
 The isolated Christian will not be able to endure unjust suffering for the glory of God
 When it comes to the identity of the church-*Who are we?*-we answer that we are the redemptive community of God, loving one another, maintaining unity with each other
 Friends, if you are on the periphery of our church, come inside, become part of community through relationships

PP *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*
Hebrews 10:24-25

Yet as we continue through this passage, we arrive at **verse 10**

It is from a portion of Psalm 34, written by David to express his thanksgiving that God protects and cares for the righteous, as he himself experienced as God preserved him as he fled from King Saul's attacks into the hand of Israel's enemy King of Gath
 Peter uses this example to speak comfort to the church as Christians were increasingly surrounded by enemies and persecution

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."
3:12
'the righteous' are those made right by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ

We read that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and we might imagine He is watching us every moment in order to catch us as we slip up and sin
 Look carefully, Christian, at what **1 John 4:19** says on this: ***“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment”*** **1 John 4:18**
PP For Peter, the eyes of the Lord upon us should not invoke fear in the believer, but comfort
 It is an anchor to know that our heavenly Father looks upon every detail of our lives with love, completely, wonderfully watching over us in everything we experience
 That every prayer, every cry of pain, God’s ears are open, meaning He is listening
 This is a privilege that the nonbeliever does not experience, and particularly not those who persecute His children... ***‘the face of the Lord is against those who do evil’***
 This is a difference look from God, more than disapproval, one of judgment and justice
 God loves and protects His people, His children, not looking kindly toward those who hurt them
 This is who we are as the church and it produces an outlook, a perspective and mindset that we will need as we endure unjust suffering

PP 2-Knowing who we are as Christians gives us a powerful perspective in unjust suffering

Let me ask you the same question I have been asking myself increasingly in recent years
 What would you be willing to lose for the sake of Christ?
 There is a follow up question to that one that I think we need to hear
 What truly can we lose as a Christian?
 They can take our homes like they did to the Christians in the book of Hebrews?
 They weren’t our homes anyway, they belonged to God the true owner
 Those who persecute can reject us as friends
 That’s alright, we are called friends by Christ, and we have friends in the church
 They can put us in prison
 It doesn’t matter, we have been set free in Christ and we remain free wherever we are
 They can kill us for our faith
‘But to live is Christ and to die is gain’, so really, what can we lose as a Christian?
 There is a fearlessness that can dwell in the inner person of the Christian
What can the Christian lose??
 Everything if all you treasure is on this earth, and nothing if your treasure is stored in heaven
 The mindset of the Christian is, ***‘Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?’*** **1 Peter 3:13**

PP Charles Simeon, an English preacher of the 18th century once said, *“Fear not. Nothing can touch you that does not first pass through the hands of your Heavenly Father. Though the arrow be shot by the evil one, it cannot touch you unless God should will it so.”*

“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled” **1 Peter 3:14**

PP Paul said it similarly: ***“If God is for us, who can be against us?”*** **Romans 8:31**

Christian, we will have enemies, we’ll have opposition, they can hurt us, but no one can ultimately and finally triumph over us since God will vindicate when He judges everyone
 The one who *overcomes, who is zealous for what is good* will be blessed for eternity
 The one who persecutes and will not repent will be overcome for eternity

If God allows persecution to come to you Christian, if He allows you to lose your job, your family, your life, your freedom, for His name's sake, **'You will be blessed.'**

PP Peter was taught this by Jesus: ***"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great..."*** **Matthew 5:10-12**

PP 3-Knowing who we are as Christians gives us a powerful preparation for unjust suffering

When we understand we are the righteous of God, His eyes watching over us, it produces a courageous mindset convinced that our suffering will be met with His blessing

And the result is a peaceful, confident, gentle life

If you're under 40, it may not seem like there has been significant change in our culture

Yet recently, two middle school sisters had their bibles confiscated at school, thrown into the trash and a call was placed to their mother threatening to turn the girls over to Child Protective Services

A Sonoma State University student teacher had to remove a 2 inch cross necklace because her cooperating teacher believed it would offend the students in the classroom

An army email labeled pro-family Christian ministries as 'Domestic Hate Groups' listing them with the Ku Klux Klan and the Neo-Nazis

Pastor Louie Giglio was ousted from the 2012 presidential inauguration program because he delivered a sermon in the 1990's calling the practice of homosexuality sin

Two years ago, Nazareth's Shafer School barred an elementary student from handing out Valentine's Day cards that communicated God's love with a bible verse

Persecution against Christians is escalating and it was doing the same when **1 Peter** was written

So Peter wrote to the church: ***"honor Christ the Lord as holy in your hearts"*** **3:15a**

Be thoroughly convinced and live the truth that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all there is

When we recognize and believe that Jesus is the sovereign Lord of all, there is a great peace that comes into us knowing that nothing comes to us but what He allows

And if He allows it, it is because He has a perfect plan for it

Friends, I have discovered that this great doctrine is the most comforting one there is: *Jesus Christ is absolutely perfectly sovereign over every part of creation*

It is a powerful witness when the church is ***"always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you"*** **3:15b**

Meaning that we all need to learn how to present and explain the gospel, ***'the hope that is in'*** us But the sharing of the gospel will fall on deaf ears if our lives do not reflect it

So we explain the good news of Jesus Christ with lives of ***"gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."*** **3:15c-17**

Look back a bit to **3:10-11**, ***"For 'Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.'"***

I've never been able to debate or argue anyone into following Christ and neither did Jesus!
 It is a gentle, peaceful, respectful life that gives credibility to the simple message of the gospel
 We speak words of life with the peace of God to those in need of it

Christian, '*Who are we?*' is answered with the righteous, and the world will increasingly hate us
 Let that hatred and rejection not be because we live no different than the world, but let it be
 because we have given our lives to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
 We are aliens here, sojourners among unbelievers, and as we love and serve Jesus we will suffer
 That suffering is temporary, and God will bless us in the midst of, and as a result of it
 So Christian, prepare now, get ready, do not be surprised at the fiery trial coming (**1 Peter 4:12**)

One early church Christian, Jerome, said that Peter was led to the site of his crucifixion, but that
 he requested he be crucified upside down, unworthy to die in the same form and manner
 of Jesus

Peter understood suffering, not only in his martyrdom, but in his life
 And when we today think of suffering, we perhaps most commonly think about illness, death of
 a loved one, marriage struggles, depression, or loneliness

Amen?

Pray