

Studies in 1 Peter-03 1 Peter 1:10-13

by Dwight Pentecost

The Bible teaches that righteous men suffer because God's method of perfecting his saints is to subject them to testing, which ultimately leads to their glorification.

Duration: 36:24

Scripture: Matthew 26:39, John 16:12-14, Hebrews 5:7-9, 1 Peter 1:12-13, 1 Peter 1:16

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Suffering And Glory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of sobriety in our understanding of trials and testing. He explains that sobriety does not refer to the use of intoxicants, but rather to seeing things in their true light. The speaker highlights the need to recognize that testing comes from God, not Satan, and that it is meant to mold and conform us to the image of Christ. He also discusses the concept of girding up the loins of our mind, which involves receiving the doctrinal fact that suffering is connected to glory in Christ. The sermon references various biblical examples and prophecies that point to the coming of Jesus as the Savior of the world. The speaker encourages listeners to rely on the Word of God to overcome doubts and trust in God's plan for their lives.

Transcript

The oldest question men have ever faced is the question as to why a righteous man should be tested and suffer. This was the question which is faced in the book of Job, which is perhaps the oldest book in our scriptures. The prophets of the Old Testament gave themselves repeatedly to this theme.

Why does God permit a righteous man to suffer? Every religious system that men have devised, and every philosophical system which men have followed, have addressed themselves to this perplexing question. Men are not surprised that wicked men suffer, for we can readily accept the proposition that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reach. We recognize that it is just that a man should receive for his injustices.

But what justification is there that God would permit a righteous man to be tested, tried, and to suffer? Because the saints of God are in a privileged position, because by faith in Jesus Christ they have been brought into God's family and have become beloved children of the Father, the question becomes particularly acute. If a man who behaves himself morally seems to be exempt from suffering, how much more one who has been obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ? And it is to this perplexing question the Apostle Peter has addressed himself in writing to suffering saints who were scattered throughout Asia

Minor in his first epistle. The Apostle reminded us that when we were born into God's family, we were born to receive a hope, a settled assurance of our resurrection.

Therefore, this life is only the threshold to life, not the sum total of life. We have been begotten not only to an assured hope, but to an inheritance. This inheritance is a place in the Father's presence.

We have been given one who keeps us even in the midst of testing, and as a result we can rejoice as we believe God. But in order to carry his readers a step further in this basic problem, in the passage to which we direct your attention this morning, 1 Peter 1, verses 10-13, the Apostle shows us that the Old Testament prophets who wrote concerning the coming of Jesus Christ wrestled with the same basic problem that these suffering believers wrestled with. The problem of why a righteous man must suffer.

The Apostle reminds us that the prophets, that is, the Old Testament writers of Scripture, inquired and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand two things. First, the sufferings of Christ, and second, the glory that should follow. Peter reminds us that the coming of Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world was a central theme of the Old Testament.

From the time that God made a promise in Genesis chapter 3 that the seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head, on down to the close of the Old Testament when the prophet Malachi prophesied of the coming of the Son of Righteousness, the Old Testament had promised the coming of a Savior. That coming Savior was typified in God's sacrifice of a lamb to cover Adam's sin and to cover Adam's nakedness. That coming Savior was prophesied in the offering made by Abel, repudiated by Cain, the blood-offering sacrifice to God in obedience to the commands of God.

That coming Savior was prophesied in Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, and then the substitution of an animal for Isaac there on the altar. The coming of the Savior was prophesied in every animal sacrificed to God on Jewish altars in obedience to the command of God. The prophets wrote of this coming one.

In Psalm 22, his death is described in detail. In Isaiah chapter 53, the prophet so graphically describes the suffering Savior who, as a lamb brought to the slaughter to be sacrificed, so Jesus Christ would give himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world. On the one hand, in giving hope to men that God would make a final dealing with sin, the Old Testament by type and by written and spoken prophecy anticipated a suffering Savior.

But on the other hand, the Old Testament gave us an entirely different picture of the coming one. In Psalm 24, he is described as the invincible King of glory, the coming of one whose glory is so great it brings light to the earth. The prophet Zechariah describes his invincibility, showing that before him nations would bow and subject themselves to his irresistible authority.

And from beginning to the end of the Old Testament, the transcendent glory and the resplendent might of the coming Savior was portrayed to Israel, so that through the prophet a twofold message concerning the two phases of Messiah's coming was presented to the nation. He was a Savior who must suffer, but he was also a Savior of glory. But this created an irreconcilable division in the minds of those who received these prophecies.

Peter tells us that the prophets who wrote could not reconcile this difference. How can one be irresistible in his might and resplendent in his glory, and at the same time suffer? Where would enemies arise who

would assault and despise and reject such in one that would cause the postponement of his kingdom? For had not the prophet David given the words with which the Father welcomed the glorious Son into his presence after his suffering when he said, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool? And in Psalm 110, the prophet is anticipating the seeming defeat of Jesus Christ, the postponement of the institution of his kingdom, and a delay in the accomplishment of all that he had come to do as a glorious king. And when these two truths were presented by Moses, Moses could not reconcile the problem.

When David, the royal king and the prophet, described the sufferings of Christ and the glory, he found no way of reconciling this problem. Isaiah had no more wisdom than his predecessors, nor did Zechariah and Malachi, who were heirs of the wisdom of the ages as it had been applied to the written scriptures. And so, this problem was an unresolved problem.

4 Peter tells us, The prophets who prophesied of the grace that should be brought to you, searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. I do notice this one interesting fact, that even though the prophets could not resolve this problem, they did not dismiss the truth in their revelation because they could not understand it themselves. We, with our intellectualism today, sit as judges upon the word of God.

That which seems irreconcilable to us, that which seems not understandable to us, that which seems out of harmony with our theories or philosophies or our thinking, we are so quick to reject. But the prophets who were faced with this irreconcilable problem trusted God that in his own time he would reconcile the difference and would explain to them and cause them to understand how Christ could suffer on one hand and how he could be glorified on the other. So, the Old Testament closed with the basic problem essentially unresolved and the truth unrealized.

They recognized that what they wrote was written under the authority by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for these prophets did not originate their own message. Revelation has to do with God's disclosure of himself and his truth to man. God revealed himself, and these prophets had these two facets of truth which they recognized as a divine revelation.

Messiah must suffer, Messiah must be glorified. That was not their conception, that was not a conflict between two different writers writing from two viewpoints at two different times in history. This was the united testimony of the Old Testament prophets.

They had received revelation. And then that which God had revealed to them under the control of the Holy Spirit, they wrote into the scriptures. And inspiration had to do with recording the revelation of divine truth that had been given to them.

And these writers did not compare scripture with scripture, and because one prophet emphasized the glory of Christ, and another prophet emphasized the sufferings of Christ, conclude that there were errors in the scriptures. They recognized that the Spirit of Christ, that is the Holy Spirit, revealed truth to them, and then caused them to write the truth that had been revealed. There is one essential link in this chain of understanding the mystery of the sufferings and the glory of Christ that was missing, for the Holy Spirit, who had come to dwell with man or alongside man, had not yet been given to indwell man.

And when I turn back to the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, in verses 12 to 14, or verse 50, Christ is promising a new ministry of the Spirit following his advent to indwell believers on the day of Pentecost. Christ said, I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. The Spirit will continue the work of revelation.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. For he shall not speak of himself, that is by his own authority, but whatsoever he shall hear, that is from the Father, that shall speak he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Now, in this passage, our Lord is promising that when the Holy Spirit would come, he would take the scriptures that had been written, the revelations that had been given, and he would cause those who had received the revelation to understand what had been revealed. This we call illumination, and Christ is promising the Holy Spirit as the illuminator of the scriptures that had been written. Now, let's apply it to the problem in 1 Peter.

Peter has reminded us of the age-old problem. Why do righteous men suffer? He says, this problem existed without any final solution, for the final solution was awaiting the coming of the illuminator, the coming of the Holy Spirit. And he uses as an illustration of this fact the Old Testament truth that Messiah must suffer and must be glorified.

This truth the Old Testament prophets could not understand. And I fully believe that when contemporary prophets met together, this was one of the questions that they discussed, but with no final solution. And Peter tells us that a revelation of the fact was given, but an explanation of the fact awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And when I read in verse 12, unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us did they minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into. And what Peter is telling us in verse 13 is the fact that the Holy Spirit has come, he has given teachers to believers, the Holy Spirit has taught these teachers these very truths so that the teachers under the authority of the Holy Spirit may teach or preach or proclaim the good news to these believers. Now, what was the good news? The relationship between suffering and glory.

He is not emphasizing here so much the fact that the preachers preached salvation, which they certainly did, for these readers had been brought to a knowledge of Christ through the preaching of the gospel that Christ came to save sinful man. They had been saved by the presentation of one of the two aspects of the Old Testament presentation of Christ. They had been saved because Christ suffered.

But now the Holy Spirit makes it very clear through these teachers and preachers that God's method of glorifying Christ was to bring him to suffering, that even for Jesus Christ there could be no glory apart from suffering and testing. May I re-emphasize it that not even Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Eternal God, could be perfected in glory apart from the experiences of testing and suffering. Now, may I direct you to several New Testament passages that emphasize this truth.

First of all, in Hebrews chapter 5, verses 7 to 9, Hebrews 5, 7 to 9, after quoting Psalm 110, which is a reference to the Son of God, the writer says, "...in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers

and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." The reference, without doubt, in verse 7 is to our Lord's garden experience, where when the shadow of death hung over him, as it is recorded in the Gospels, our Lord cried to the Father three times, "...if it be possible, let this cut pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." He cried with strong crying and tears, but he prayed according to the will of God.

And then, in verse 8, the writer reminds us that Christ learned obedience by the things which he suffered. We must be very careful about this verse. It does not say he learned to obey.

It does not say that he was disobedient, and that his lawless will was corralled and brought into subjection to God by the disciplines or the punishments which he endured. He learned what obedience to God entails, and obedience means complete submission to the will of God. Complete submission to the will of God for Jesus Christ meant his death on the cross, but complete submission to God for us meant a salvation was provided through his death.

He learned what obedience entails by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect. Now, that does not mean that sin was removed from him. He was the sinless, perfect Son of God.

There was no sin to be eliminated or atoned for, but being perfected in his obedience, or being perfectly obedient, through that obedience he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. And the apostle is reminding us in these three verses that the only way Jesus Christ could provide salvation for sinners was to submit in obedience to the will of God. Now, look at another passage, please, where the same truth is emphasized.

I ask you to turn to John, chapter 17. John, chapter 17, where our Lord at the beginning of what we often refer to as our Lord's Prayer, or the High Priestly Prayer, before he prays for believers, prays for himself. And this is his petition, John 17.1. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour has come.

What hour? The hour of his death, the hour in which the perfection of his obedience would be demonstrated to God, to angels, to Satan, and to man. The hour has come. Glorify thy son.

This glorification was Christ's glory through perfect obedience. It was the glory of the cross, and Christ could glory in the cross because it was the sum total of his submission and his obedience to the Father. He is praying, then, if I can paraphrase it, Father, the hour has come.

Let me complete my obedience to thee by going to the cross, so that thy son may glorify thee. His obedience on the cross was the means by which the son glorified the Father, but yet further. He says in verse 4, I have glorified thee on the earth, that is, by my perfect obedience.

I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify thou me. What glory is he praying for in verse 5? The restoration to his position at the right hand of the Father upon the completion of his sufferings here on earth. Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Now, what was Christ's thought in these five verses? That he had come into this world in order to be obedient to the will of God. The will of God for him entailed suffering, and it was by the endurance of suffering that his obedience was brought to perfection, to completion, to finality. And through the

perfection of his obedience, he provided salvation for sinners.

He glorified the Father by being obedient to the Father, and the Father in turn could glorify him so that the path to glory for the Son was by way of the cross. And apart from the cross, there was no glory for Christ, no glory for the Father, and no salvation for sinners. Now, let's go back to 1 Peter and notice what he says there.

In verse 12, what the Old Testament prophets could not reconcile in their twofold description of Christ, we through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit have now come to understand that that truth concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory of Christ was primarily for our benefit, for they ministered the things unto us. These truths are preached in the gospel by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. So, Peter wants his readers, these suffering, persecuted sheep over whom he is a shepherd, to get this principle that God could not glorify Christ and perfect the obedience of Christ apart from subjecting Christ to suffering.

And he would remind them of what Christ said himself in John 16, that if they've done these things unto me, they'll do them unto you. That God's principle of perfecting and glorifying Christ is a principle by which he will deal with his children. Therefore, sufferings do not originate from Satan to fulfill Satan's plan.

Sufferings do not originate from sins in the lives of the believers. Sufferings are the method that God has chosen to perfect us that we might bear the image of Christ now, to glorify Christ here, that we might fully bear his glory over there. Now, on the basis of this doctrine, Peter in verse 13 gives us a threefold conclusion.

First of all, gird up the loins of your mind. You'll notice this statement is introduced with the word, therefore, because of what the Spirit teaches us about the relation between sufferings and glory in Christ. Gird up the loins of your mind.

Men normally covered their undergarment, a short tunic, with a long-flowing robe. That robe, such as is referred to at the time of the crucifixion of Christ, was one large square of cloth. It would be impossible to keep that robe in place without the use of a sash or a girdle, and to gird the robe was to bind it together to keep it in its rightful place, to keep it from straying.

When he says, gird up the loins of your mind, Peter is saying, in effect, don't let your thoughts wander. Don't let your imagination run wild when you try to consider this problem of why righteous men suffer, because when your mind is not brought under the authority of Scripture, the mind raises all sorts of questions and doubts. And first thing you know, the child of God is saying, what right does God have to do this to me? We become those who sit in judgment upon divine omniscience and omnipotence.

We say we know better than God, and that which keeps the mind in its right channel is the realization of this doctrine, that God's method of perfecting his saints is to subject them to testing. And the knowledge that that is God's method of conforming us to Christ now, that we might fully bear his image later, will keep the mind from wandering in the maze of men's ignorance so that we sit in judgment upon God. And when something comes to you and you're tempted to ask why, remember you need to gird up your mind with the word of God that you might be delivered from these doubts.

The second conclusion of the revelation of this truth is that we are to be sober, to be sober. And sobriety has to do not with the use of intoxicants, it has to do with seeing things in their true light, see things in their

true light. When a test comes, we feel that it originates from Satan.

We're going to have an entirely different response to it than if we realize the scriptural truth that that is God at work in our lives. How can James say in chapter one, count it all joy when you fall into diverse testing? Well, you have to be some kind of a nut to respond to testing that way. Yes, you are a nut, unless you are grounded on the truth that that testing is God's handiwork to bring you into conformity to Christ.

See things in their true light for what they actually are. God at work to mold and fashion and conform us to the image of his son. The third conclusion, hope to the end.

The girding up the loin of our mind has to do with the reception of a doctrinal fact. The sobriety has to do with our present experience. The hope has to do with our future destiny.

So he has moved from the present to the assured future, even in the midst of suffering. We have a settled assurance that looks to the end, not the end of time, nor the end of life. It looks to the end of the testing process.

The end of the testing process is conformity to Christ. And so, that those who are being tested today might endure those testing with the joy of the Lord and faith of God as their portion, Peter builds a doctrinal base. He refers to Jesus Christ, who could come to glory only by suffering.

Reminds them that the Spirit now tells us that God will bring us to bear the image of Christ by asking us to emulate the submission of Christ to testing, so that we might glorify him in the testing, that we might be fitted to bear his glory through the unending ages of eternity. One who understands and receives that truth of the word of God can have a new attitude toward his testing. He brings his mind under subjection to the authority of the word, and is delivered from doubt and despair.

He lives with the assurance that God is evidencing his own work in the life, because he is conforming us to Christ. Now it will be Peter's portion to move on to show how the testings work themselves out in a believer's life, and what changes God's handiwork will make in the life of the child of God. Lord willing, in our study next time, we will see holiness as the product of suffering.

We thank thee, our Father, that thou art so patient with thy children, that gently thou dost deal with us, and thou dost not suffer us to be tested above that we are able to bear, for thou dost not test to crush, thou dost test to conform. We pray that we might, with minds settled on the truth of the word of God, have this joyous experience of knowing that God is at work in our midst. Give us the mind of Christ that brings us into submission to the Lord Jesus, so that God is not interrupted in his work of preparing us to be instruments to reflect his glory.

We pray that if there is one here this morning who is not a child of God, and whose life God cannot and will not work because he is not his child, that one may turn to Jesus Christ and accept Christ as a personal Savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Let the riches of thy grace, and mercy, and peace rest upon us, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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