



SERIES:	60 & 2 Peter - Rock Solid - 2013
MESSAGE:	The Dos and Don'ts of Suffering
SPEAKER:	Skip Heitzig
SCRIPTURE:	1 Peter 4:12-19

MESSAGE SUMMARY

Pain and suffering dominate our world. To some, that poses an insurmountable roadblock to faith in a good and loving God. How can a loving God let such unlovely things happen all around the globe every day for millennia? Not only is this a deal breaker for unbelievers, but it presents a quandary for believers who want to make sense out of everything in life. The apostle Peter weighed in on these issues in a very personal way to his fellow Christians.

DETAILED NOTES

- I. Introduction
 - A. Suffering in our world makes us want to avoid it at all costs; suffering in our personal world makes us want to question God's love
 - B. Most people would say God made one mistake in creating this world: He has allowed so much pain and suffering (see *Where Is God When It Hurts?* by Philip Yancey)
 1. Where is *no* God when it hurts?
 2. "I notice that these atheists are never asked to speak at such places as Sandy Hook Elementary School" —Yancey (paraphrased)
 3. A Christian can say, "What happened was tragic; however, we believe there is a good God who will make all things work together for your good if you trust Him"
 - C. Peter wrote about suffering twenty-one times in 1 Peter
- II. Don't Be Surprised by Suffering (v. 12)
 - A. Don't think it's weird, bizarre, or unusual when you suffer—it's not
 - B. This is some people's favorite reason to reject the God of the Bible
 1. "How could a God of love who's all-powerful ever allow evil to exist?"
 2. Formal term: *theodicy*
 - C. If only bad people had bad things happen, we would do better with it; we have a problem with innocent people suffering
 - D. Whenever you ask why there's so much evil in the world, you only ask that because you have some notion that there is supreme good
 1. If there is no God, then where did we get the standard of goodness by which we measure evil?
 2. The problem of good; the moral argument
 3. "If the universe is so bad...how on earth did human beings ever come to attribute it to the activity of a wise and good Creator?" —C.S. Lewis
 - E. If more than ninety percent of all the people who have ever lived on earth have believed in God, where did that notion come from?

- F. If there's no God, there are no ultimate values; if there are no ultimate values, there's no such thing as good or evil
 - G. *Fiery trial* (v. 12)
 - 1. Peter penned this letter at the end of AD 64
 - 2. In the summer of AD 64, Rome burned; most people believe Caesar Nero started the fire
 - 3. The population nearly revolted, and Nero blamed the Christians
 - 4. He put many of them on poles, doused them in pitch, and used them as torches to light up the imperial gardens at night
 - 5. This began a two-hundred-year reign of terror against Roman believers
- III. Don't Be Scared by Suffering (vv. 13-14)
- A. We have no right to expect better treatment from this world than Jesus received
 - 1. Peter took suffering and extolled it
 - 2. It's a position of honor; you're suffering with Christ
 - B. Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" and he answered, "Why not? They're the only ones who can take it"
 - C. As believers, we're not naïve concerning evil
 - 1. It exists
 - a. We're not like Christian Science
 - b. Mary Baker Eddy: evil, disease, and death is all an illusion
 - 2. God allows evil to exist, and He's in absolute control of the universe He made
 - a. Open theism or processed theology says God is in the process of becoming a better God
 - b. It says He doesn't know what will happen tomorrow; every day, He's learning new things
 - 3. God has a purpose for it
 - a. It makes you pure; 1 Peter 1:6-7
 - b. It humbles you
 - I. Paul had the temptation toward pride
 - II. 2 Corinthians 12:7
 - c. It makes you depend on God like nothing else
 - I. 2 Corinthians 12:8-10
 - II. God's power is attracted to human weakness; 1 Corinthians 1:27
 - III. His power kicks in when my power runs out
 - IV. No one is ever too weak to be powerful; we're only too strong
- IV. Do Be Selective in Suffering (vv. 16-17)
- A. If you're going to suffer—and you will—make sure it's for the right reason
 - B. *Christian* (v. 16)
 - 1. You only find this word three times in the whole Bible
 - 2. Early Christians called themselves believers, the Way, or brethren
 - 3. *Christian* was a derogatory nickname given by Romans and Greeks who wanted to set them apart from the rest of the Roman Empire
 - 4. Most people of the Roman Empire were called *Kaisarianos*, followers of Caesar
 - 5. Christians were given the name *Christianos*, followers of Christ
 - 6. Over time, early believers embraced the name *Christian*
 - C. Proverbs 11:31
 - D. What did Peter mean in verse 17?

1. Simply what he had already been saying: the work of a loving God using suffering to purify His church
 2. We are saved through difficult times; Matthew 7:13-14
 3. The only weird thing about persecution is if you don't get any
 4. Acts 14:22
 5. Think of how horribly painful it will eventually be for the unbeliever
 6. If God purifies His church through suffering, what about the end of the ungodly?
- E. Suffering in this world makes us long for heaven, but this world is all the heaven that some people will ever see
- V. Do Be Sensitized by Suffering (v. 19)
- A. Verse 19: underline this
 1. Some of you have been told that suffering is never in the will of God
 2. You better change your thinking
 - B. *Commit* is a banking term that means to deposit something for safekeeping
 1. When you deposit your trust in God's bank, you will get dividends of blessings in your account
 2. He won't let anything you deposit go to waste; every bit of trust you deposit will be rewarded
 - C. Better translation: "And continue to be doing what is right and what is good"
 1. If doing good is what got you in trouble in the first place, you'd think, "I better not do any more good"
 2. Peter said, "Don't do that; commit that to God and continue to do good"
 - D. Peter never saw suffering as academic; it was real
 1. John 9:1-12
 2. The disciples asked, "Why?"—the question that never goes away
 3. Jesus never answered the question; He healed the blind man
 4. Verse 4: "Right now the answer theologically, academically, philosophically as to why there's evil in the world doesn't matter much to him; what matters to him is that he can't see. I'm going to fix that"
 - E. Christians started the first hospitals and orphanages
 - F. Christianity was birthed into a hostile, brutal, Greco-Roman world that saw life as disposable
 1. We don't want to deal with the problem in a classroom or discussion group
 2. We want to do more; we want to be active; we want to do it practically
- VI. Closing
- A. We're His hands and His feet; we're the body of Christ
 - B. Why can't "acts of God" be when He enacts love and compassion through the life of one of His children?
 - C. Matthew 25:40; James 1:27
 - D. Rather than dealing with suffering academically, we want to enter into it

Figures referenced: Philip Yancey, C.S. Lewis, Caesar Nero, Mary Baker Eddy

Greek/Hebrew words: *Kaisarianos, Christianos*

Cross references: Proverbs 11:31; Matthew 7:13-14; 25:40; John 9:1-12; Acts 14:22; 1 Corinthians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 1:27; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-19

Topic: Suffering

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