



# THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**The Compass:  
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word  
on  
Your Discipleship Path**

Sermon Series: “Why? Questions We Want to Ask” (Easter/Pentecost 2019)

This Week's Theme and Scriptural Focus: “Suffering and Evil (Why does God allow suffering and evil?)” 1 Peter 1.3-12

This Week's Mark(s) of Discipleship: **Joy; Peace; Patience.**

☐ **Day #1--Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup>.** **Read:** 1 Peter 1.3. **Encounter:** God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See? As the old saying goes, “there are two certainties in life: death and taxes!” Probably a third and fourth certainty would be difficult times and the reality of suffering. The early Christians, and particularly Peter, understood this reality very well!

Peter writes his letter, 1 Peter, likely from Rome during a severe persecution and near the end of his life. Written about 62–63 A.D., Peter is encouraging the church during this persecution. The purpose of the letter is to:

...encourage believers to stand fast while they endure suffering and distress in the present evil age... They are encouraged to persevere, knowing that a great reward will be theirs on the day of salvation. Such perseverance is exhibited by living a godly life, living as good citizens, model slaves, gentle wives, and understanding husbands. When believers live in such a way, they indicate that they are placing their hope in God rather than in the joys and comforts of this world. Another way of describing 1 Peter is to say that those who hope and trust in God and in his future reward will have the strength to endure whatever comes their way in the present.<sup>1</sup>

The hope that believers have in persecution, is the same hope they have in salvation—that Jesus Christ has chosen us and has given us new life!

As Peter explains how rich a salvation believers enjoy he tells us that it comes from God's great mercy, consists of new birth to new life and hope, brings about the resurrection, is made possible by Jesus Christ, and will lead to an inheritance. Salvation is described with reference to the past (Christians have been given new birth by God's mercy), to the present (Christians are being shielded by God's power) and to the future (at *the last time* will come the final deliverance from evil).<sup>2</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** What are you struggling with in your life right now? Consider your struggles in light of our study this week. Pray every day that God will sustain in you a living hope through Jesus.

☐ **Day #2--Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup>.** **Read:** 1 Peter 1.4-5. **Examine:** The Text and its Relationship to other Passages.

Unlike Peter, we are not eyewitnesses of Jesus, but through faith, we believe in Him and love Him. Our eyes will see Him on the Last Day, but even now we encounter Christ through His Word and Sacraments as He gives us saving faith, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life... As Peter saw Jesus' glory in the transfiguration, so by faith we are filled with His glorious presence.<sup>3</sup>

The hope that we have in Christ is based on God's promises. The Greek word translated, “inheritance,” is *klēronomian*, and is the same word used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) to refer to Israel's promised possession of the land. “A Christian's inheritance cannot be destroyed by hostile forces, and it will not spoil like over-ripened fruit or

1 T.R. Schreiner. *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003).

2 D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

3 *Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

fade in color.”<sup>4</sup> As Biblical scholars J.F. Walvoord and R.B. Zuck note, not only are God’s people promised that we have an inheritance waiting for us, we also are promised the present power of God. Commenting on the word “guard” in verse 5, Walvoord and Zuck note that:

“Shielded” (Greek: *phrouromenous*)... is a military term, used to refer to a garrison within a city (Phil. 4:7 uses the same Gr. word). What greater hope could be given to those undergoing persecution than the knowledge that God’s power guards them from within, to preserve them for an inheritance of salvation that will be completely revealed to them in God’s presence. Believers possess salvation now (pres. tense) but will sense its full significance at the return of Christ in the last time. This final step, or ultimate completion of “the salvation of their souls” (1 Peter 1:9), will come “when Jesus Christ is revealed,” a clause Peter used twice (vv. 7, 13)<sup>5</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Through Christ, God has promised us the riches of heaven...Our true home...Nothing in this world can take our inheritance from us. [Martin Luther writes]: “This blessing is ours forever and ever, even though we do not see it now...On earth no pleasure is so great that it does not become unpleasant as time goes on. We see that one becomes weary of everything. But this blessing is different. All this is ours in Christ, by God’s mercy, if we believe.”<sup>6</sup>

□ **Day #3--Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. Read: 1 Peter 1.6-7. Examine:** The Text and its Relationship to other Passages. All Scripture compares temptation to fire. Thus here St. Peter also likens the gold that is tested by fire to the testing of faith by temptation and suffering. Fire does not impair the quality of gold, but it purifies it, so that all alloy is removed. Thus God has imposed the cross on all Christians to cleanse and to purge them well, in order that faith may remain pure, just as the Word is, so that one adheres to the Word alone and relies on nothing else. For we really need such purging and affliction every day because of the coarse old Adam.”<sup>7</sup>

As Luther alludes to, suffering in this life will happen because we live in a broken world and we are sinful (“the coarse old Adam”). So one of the questions of suffering and struggle is: How do we deal with its reality? The truth is we learn more from pain than we do from pleasure. We always learn more from failure than we do from success. It’s in the tough times that we develop character, not the easy times. God is interested in molding and making you. It is not by accident that God’s chosen people—the term given to Israel, the Jews—have suffered significant oppression throughout history. Some of their suffering was due to their sin; other suffering due to other nations oppressing them—one right after the other. The same is true today. We sometimes suffer because of our sin or the sins of others. And, sometimes we struggle, just as Israel did in the past, because we are in a spiritual battle! God’s people refuse to bow to any other authority other than God, which makes tyrants and the powers of evil angry at God’s people. Additionally, God cares about His people, and He develops and shapes His people through suffering, consequently building them and maturing them. The truth is, until Jesus returns and brings in the new heavens and new earth, we will go through testing. Warren Weirsby writes, “A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.” The Bible reveals that suffering is real, serious, and God takes it seriously—by suffering for and with us! Because of this, our suffering is not empty, worthless, or wasted. Again, Weirsby notes:

[1 Peter] Verse 7 compares the trial of our faith to the testing of gold. The word “trial” means “approval.” The comparison suggested by Dr. Kenneth Wuest is that of a prospector bringing ore in to be tested. The assayer gives him a certificate stating that the ore contains gold. The certificate is the approval of the ore, and this paper is worth much more than the little sample of ore that was tested. In the same way our faith is tested, a “sample” at a time; and the approval of our faith means that there are more riches to follow. The suffering we endure here will result in more glory when Christ comes. Knowing this, we love Him the more.<sup>8</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Life is like photography. When you take a picture, what you get is a negative. You have to take it into a dark room, and turn a negative into a positive by shining light through it in an enlarger onto a photographic paper. When the light shines through the negative onto the photographic paper it becomes a positive. [In the book of Ecclesiastes] Solomon is taking snapshots of life. He says life looks pretty negative. It’s not fair and there are a lot of things that just aren’t right in the world. But God can turn the negatives in your life into positives if you let the light of His love shine through it. And He’ll build positive things out of it.”<sup>9</sup>

4 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

5 Ibid.

6 *Lutheran Study Bible*.

7 Martin Luther. *Luther’s Works: American Edition*. 30:17.

8 W.W. Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1986).

9 Rick Warren. “Why Isn’t Life Fair?”

□ **Day #4--Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup>. Read: 1 Peter 1.8-9. Explore:** The background to this text(s).

Peter knows what it means to face temptations and trials. He surely remembered the pain of denying Jesus. Peter faced trials throughout his life as a follower of Jesus, yet he discovered, even through the pain, there are blessings and benefits that come because God is at work in the midst of our suffering. Peter cites three specific results of the trials which God allows to come into our lives.

*The grief of trials* (v. 6): Peter begins by acknowledging the legitimate grief that comes from manifold trials. Grieving (Greek: *lupédō*) is an important human emotion. God created us with the capacity to grieve. Jesus demonstrated the depths of human grief when he stood before the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus who had been dead for three days. Jesus wept (John 11:35).

2. *The purpose of trials* (v. 7): But in the midst of that grief, God is graciously assuring us that there is a positive purpose in our suffering. While God is not the cause of evil suffering and pain, still He does not allow it to be wasted. He uses every trial for our good if we commit ourselves to Him (Rom. 8:28).

3. *The joy of trials* (v. 8): Peter now focuses upon the marvelous subject of joy. In the midst of trials, we can experience authentic joy. The joy of the Lord does not come from the externals of life. It can be experienced only as we walk in the Spirit and receive joy as one of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). The possession of joy is always dependent upon living in a vital relationship to Christ. Where the Lord is, there is authentic joy.<sup>10</sup>

In v. 8, the reference to “though you have not seen him” relates to those Christians who never saw or knew Jesus personally (like us!). However (like us!), we can “love him.” The Greek word here for “love” is *agapate* and “should be construed as an indicative rather than an imperative. Peter was not exhorting the churches but commending them here. Their sufferings have not made them morose and miserable. They are filled with love for Jesus Christ. He is precious and lovely to them.”<sup>11</sup> The participle “receiving” (Greek: *komizomenoi*) in v. 9 can be read as describing the reason: “For you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” In other words, Peter was explaining why believers are filled with love and joy for Jesus—because of the hope and promise of a future despite their suffering and trials.

The present tense of the verb “rejoice” and the parallelism with the verb “love” in v. 8 indicates that “rejoice” describes the experience of believers now. Salvation, as we have seen in v. 5, is eschatological, consummated only on the last day. The present participle (*komizomenoi*) does not necessarily indicate that the salvation in view here is present. Indeed, the word “outcome” (*telos*) suggests that a future gift is in view. It is possible that we have here the “now” and “not yet” tension that is so common in the New Testament. Believers now enjoy salvation and yet will experience it fully at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In any case, believers are full of love and joy even now because of the hope of salvation.<sup>12</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** In times of crisis and pain, do you tend to lean on God or blame God? Has suffering made you bitter or better?

□ **Day #5—Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. Read: 1 Peter 1.10-12. Explore:** The Background to this Text.

Peter is describing here the truth that the prophets in the Old Testament pointed to the reality of Jesus’ coming, as well as the blessings that will come from Jesus. Peter’s encouragement is that even though the times are tough, believers are experiencing the very fulfillment of scripture!

A similar lesson was communicated to the apostles by Jesus himself: “Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (Matt 13:16–17). Believers also stand in contrast to the angels, for they also long to glance at and reflect upon these truths...More specifically, angels do not experience the gospel in the same way as human beings since they are not the recipients of redemption.

10 P.A. Cedar and L.J. Ogilvie. *James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1984).

11 Schreiner. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*

12 Ibid.

Again, the privilege of enjoying and anticipating salvation comes to the forefront. Old Testament prophets saw it from afar, and angels also marvel when gazing upon what God has done in Christ, while the Petrine readers actually experience it!<sup>13</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “We are born in sin and continue to commit sins in this fallen world. By ourselves, we have no hope of salvation or blessings. But God foretold His gracious plans through the prophets. In the fullness of time, He sent His Son to be our Redeemer. He has given us the gift of His Holy Spirit, that we might be brought to faith and persevere in the faith. Through Jesus Christ, we now have a living hope and know the promise of God that we will live in Him forever. We can face any trial or challenge, knowing that we are safe in His care. [Pray]: Lord God, heavenly Father, give grace to preachers who proclaim Christ and Your Word. Grant that those who hear Your Word may learn of His all-availing sacrifice on the cross. Strengthen us in our faith in the midst of suffering, that we may gaze upon the glory of our Savior. Amen.”<sup>14</sup>

□ **Day #6-Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. Read: Psalm 77.1-14. Meditate and Pray: Embrace**—God and His guiding you through His Word.

Today, we again use this order of prayer from Luther’s *Small Catechism*.<sup>15</sup> Use this and the suggested text as your guide. Read the above Psalm and then:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

*Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

13 Schreiner. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*

14 *Lutheran Study Bible*.

15 Martin Luther. “Luther’s Small Catechism.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009, xii.