Peter: Living Like the People of God

WHEN THROUGH FIERY TRIALS

Wednesday, November 6

Reading: 1 Peter 3-5

> ***1 Peter 5:6*** *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.* ***7*** *Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.* ***8*** *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* ***9*** *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* ***10*** *And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* ***11*** *To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Something appears to change in the middle of chapter four! Peter has been speaking about suffering as a Christian and living for God and each other. He closes with a benediction that seems to end the letter (3:8 - 4:11). Then suddenly he picks back up again and writes with more urgency about "the fiery ordeal that has come on you" (2:12). What happened to cause Peter to pick up his pen once more?

I suggest that the event that urged Peter to write this postscript was the great fire of AD 64 that burned much of Rome. To divert accusations from himself, Emperor Nero blamed the Christians and began killing them in horrific ways to entertain the crowds and appease their desire for revenge on the "arsonists." Peter writes to encourage those who are about to experience this intense persecution and explain what it will do in their lives.

First, it would give them a share of Christ's suffering (4:12-14). This should be a cause for joy because it brings them closer to Christ. Second, their suffering would show God's glory (4:14-16). The way Christians responded to being wrongly accused and persecuted would bring many to a saving knowledge of Christ. This persecution would also cleanse the church (4:17-19). True believers will surrender to God's will and commit their lives into His hands.

Peter concludes his letter with a warning to church leaders (5:1-10). They must guard themselves against the way the world views power and authority and instead by humble examples. They must always remember and teach that Satan wants to tear believers down and devour them. But Christ wants to lift us up and make us "strong, firm and steadfast."

LESSON ONE: How do you respond to suffering? Do you see it as a test or a nuisance? Do you respond with complaints or joy? (see 4:12-13) How does the right attitude in suffering bring glory to God?

LESSON TWO: One ancient church historian wrote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Through their faithful witness unto death, those early Christians gave a testimony to Christ that brought many to salvation. Does your life point people to Jesus? Why or why not?

LESSON THREE: Notice that Peter talks about humbling ourselves under God's hand and casting our anxiety on Him before he speaks of resisting Satan. We must have God's power to defeat the devil. How can you be better prepared for Satan's attacks on your life?