

Text: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Letter to an Exile XV

Bridging the Gaps

6/8/14

Big Idea: As you suffer, entrust your life to the Giver of life.

Purpose: Prepare God's people for suffering and comfort those currently suffering.

[OUTLINE & OVERVIEW]

1 Peter 4:12

¹²Beloved...**I. Suffering doesn't indicate a lack of God's love for us.**

1 Peter 4:12b

...do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

II. Our anticipation of suffering lessens the blow when we endure it.

1 Peter 4:13

¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.**III. The victory of Christ is the source of our joy through suffering.**

1 Peter 4:14-16

¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.**IV. The presence of God dwells with us when we suffer.**

1 Peter 4:17-18

¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"**V. God redeems our suffering by testing us through it.**

1 Peter 4:19

¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

VI. Trust in God's faithfulness is what ties it all together.

Big Idea: As you suffer, entrust your life to the Giver of life.

[MANUSCRIPT]

Introduction:

1. Hook: A Gap: what we know and believe about God seems inconsistent with our current experience in life. At times there is no gap--usually when we're well-fed, living in peace, and everything seems manageable. The gap grows when things aren't easy. When we suffer, face persecution, struggle in life, and our prayers for relief seem unanswered, the GAP can significantly grow.
2. Need: If we would be whole Christians, we must possess a legitimate theology of suffering. It is not enough for us to say "God heals" or "God relieves pain" and stop there. What about when the pain does not stop? What about when God, by his grace and sovereignty chooses to wait to heal? How about when the prayers keep going up and it doesn't look like the answer is coming down?

I have counseled and dialogued with countless numbers of people over the years who come to crisis points in their faith, many even walking away from God--because of the GAPS.

3. Orient: A biblical theology of suffering fills the gaps. It bridges the gaps. Meaning, when we encounter suffering and the relief doesn't come miraculously or instantaneously, we can live in peace and glorify God in our lives, because we have a biblical understanding of suffering that bridges the gaps.

READ 1 Peter 4:12a

¹²Beloved...

I. Suffering doesn't indicate a lack of God's love for us.

A. Our identity as God's children doesn't falter in times of trial. (12a)

- PRV: "Beloved"
 - 2nd time we've seen this phrase. This is tender speech.
- PRV: **1 Peter 2:9-10**
 - But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession...Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- ILL: As a parent
 - My suffering isn't an indication that God loves me any less; just as my love for my children isn't shaken when they suffer.

READ 1 Peter 4:12b

...do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

II. Our anticipation of suffering lessens the blow when we endure it.

A. The second building block is readiness to face suffering. (12b)

- PRV: "do not be surprised...as though something surprising..."
 - This isn't pessimism, this isn't negativity, this is an awareness of the broken world that we live in, and the reality that Jesus told us we will face trials of many kinds.
- PRV: **John 16:33**
 - I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
- WS: "fiery" =
 - "An intense degree of some painful experience or occurrence."
- EXP: "walking in faith"
 - Not an immunity (some sort of super-power) that guarantees us that we will live free from suffering. That's false.

Transition: How do we stay ready without living with fear?

READ 1 Peter 4:13

¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

III. The victory of Christ is the source of our joy through suffering.

A. As followers of Jesus we walk the same path from suffering to glory. (13)

- PRV: Philippians 3:10-12
 - that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

B. Christ's victory means our suffering isn't pointless or endless. (13b)

- PRV: Romans 8:16-18
 - The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Transition: Similarly...

READ 1 Peter 4:14-16

¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

IV. The presence of God dwells with us when we suffer.

A. God, and his blessing, is not absent when we suffer. (14)

- EXP/APP: We are not alone when we suffer.
 - Suffering can bring with it an overwhelming sense of isolation. But we must trust God's character and presence over and above our feelings.

B. Awareness of God should keep our character intact in suffering. (15)

- APP: Guarding character
 - When we encounter suffering, we can face some of our greatest moments of temptation. It is tempting to walk away or to fight back or to justify our vice/sin when we suffer.
- PRV: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, thief, evildoer, meddler.
- EXP: Hate, selfishness, manipulation, meddling can be temptations.

C. We must lean into the presence of Christ in the midst of suffering. (16)

- APP: Trials can be a gift
 - So many in this room can attest to the fact that some of the greatest opportunities in our lives to share the gospel and to point to the glory of God come through when we face trials. This is possible when we lean into the presence of Christ--get on our knees before God, embrace Christian community and fellowship, and dwell in God's word.

READ 1 Peter 4:17-18

¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

V. God redeems our suffering by testing us through it.

A. God uses suffering to purify us. (17)

- PRV: **1 Peter 1:6-7**
 - ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- APP: God uses suffering to authenticate his people.
 - You don't follow God willy-nilly through the valley of the shadow of death.

B. God will bring everything to rights as the just judge. (17b-18)

- EXP: God's work of purifying the world begins with purifying his own people.
 - Understand, it isn't by our sufferings that we are saved--we're saved through Jesus' suffering-- but remember the context of this chapter.
- PRV: 1 Peter 4:1
 - "Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin."
- APP: A place of growth
 - Suffering helps us recognize our sin and we are grown and shaped by it as we faithfully trust God.
- EXP: v. 18
 - Re-quote of Proverbs 11:31: "Crime doesn't pay."
- APP: The narrow gate
 - This is a reminder that Jesus said those who are saved enter by a narrow gate. Walking with God in faithfulness to Jesus isn't easy; BUT the

judgment that the unrighteous/those who disobey the gospel will face makes what we deal with in this life pale in comparison.

Transition: How do we handle this practically? How do we embrace God's sovereignty on a day to day basis when we face suffering?

READ 1 Peter 4:19

¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

VI. Trust in God's faithfulness is what ties it all together.

1. This is trust that suffering as a Christian leads to God's glory and our good.
2. This is trust that God is not only the creator of the universe, he is your creator.
3. This is trust that God not only created you, he re-created you "in Christ."
4. This is the same trust we witnessed in Jesus.

- PRV: "entrusted" = "commit"

- **Luke 23:46** ⁴

⁶Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

- **1 Peter 2:23**

²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Big Idea: As you suffer, entrust your life to the Giver of life.