

People Under Pressure

Pain with Purpose

1 Peter 3:13-22

We are in a series through 1 Peter this summer, which is a letter written by one of Jesus' disciples to believers in Christ who were scattered around the Roman Empire & suffering incredible persecution at the hands of Emperor Nero. Peter wrote to encourage them, and those of us who would read this letter for generations to come. Today, we are going to study a portion of this letter on a hard subject...PAIN! This is the reason prosperity Gospel preachers seem to never preach from 1 Peter, lol.

"Pain" comes from the French word *peine* (penalty/punishment) and is a human experience for all of us. We don't like it, but we all go through it. Yes, some are sadistic (get pleasure by inflicting pain on others) and a few are masochistic (get pleasure from being in pain). But those disordered impulses are NOT normal. Most of us avoid pain, hate pain, and want to escape it!

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." **Revelation 21:4 – Pain will be No More!!!**

Until Jesus returns and sets the world right, pain will be our reality. But, for followers of Jesus, we don't have to toil in ignorance regarding our pain. But we understand that God has a purpose for every pain...

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." **C.S. Lewis**

Main Idea: People Under Pressure Realize the Purpose in Pain

"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him." **1 Peter 3:13-22**

Three Types of Pain in which Purpose Can Be Found in 1 Peter 3:13-22

I. Pain of Injustice for the Purpose of Testifying – (13-17)

Peter mentions pain and suffering for different reasons. While typically, you will avoid much pain by doing good. But not always!

"For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." **1 Peter 3:17 – Sometimes Pain is God's will for Us**

The good news is that pain is everywhere in your Bible and we have a lot of examples on how to deal with pain when it shows up in our lives...

Three Bible Characters (all Joe's) and Their Pain:

- **Jonah:** Suffered for doing evil (ran from God, swallowed by the fish)
- **Joseph:** Sold into slavery by his brothers, falsely accused, unjustly imprisoned, forgotten by the baker/cupbearer, and said about it all...

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive..." **Genesis 50:20**

- **Job:** Suffered the loss of his children, wealth, & health for no perceivable reason. God certainly changed him through it, but never answered the question, "Why?"

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." **1 Peter 3:14-16**

As a young Christian, I was fascinated by apologetics (defending the faith). What I envisioned was a packed lecture hall with two podiums: one for the great Christian apologist and the other for the atheist academic, both of whom were wearing expensive suits as they argued with one another. But, what Peter presents as apologetics (apologia) or "make a defense" in verse 15 is not that. It's more like someone suffering injustice while maintaining love, joy, peace, generosity, kindness, and Christ-likeness so that others ask WHY???

This was the secret-sauce of the early church (i.e., Emperor Julian *"These Galileans not only care for their own poor, but ours as well"* and how Christians would check the trash at night for discarded babies). They were so wildly generous, kind, loving that opportunities to "give a defense" for the faith were everywhere! Self-Evaluate on a scale of 1-10 on how compelling your generosity/forgiveness/patience is that people ask about it.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." **Matthew 5:16**

II. Pain of Sacrifice for the Purpose of Reconciling – (18)

Peter turns our attention to Jesus and the pain he suffered for us.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” 1 Peter 3:18 – Jesus’ pain served to reconcile us to God

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Cor 5:21– Sacrifice for Reconciling

Note: It’s worth saying again, **sometimes pain is God’s will for us**. It was certainly God’s will for Jesus on the cross, and it had a purpose!

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 — Christ shows the way!

Everyone needs to be reconciled to the God we have offended, and this is made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus. Similarly, many of us need to be reconciled to people we have offended or have been offended by. Reconciliation will not happen apart from sacrifice which will be painful. However...

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III. Pain of Confusion for the Purpose of Depending (19-22)

This passage of Scripture is pretty much universally agreed to be the most challenging to interpret in your entire Bible. The great reformer, Martin Luther, wrote about these verses *“I cannot understand, and I cannot explain it. And there has been no one who has explained it.”* So let me read it again...

“In which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.” 1 Peter 3:19-22

Two Interpretative Challenges of 1 Peter 3:19-22

- **Who did Jesus preach to and when in verse 19?** Either Jesus went to hell after his death on the cross to disobedient angels (demons) who had been at work in the days of Noah to preach his victory as a foretaste of what will happen in the final judgement OR Peter is saying that the spirit of Christ was preaching through Noah during the his generation just as his spirit is preaching through us to our own disobedient generation. God brought salvation to Noah despite his culture rejecting his message and God will bring salvation to believers despite our culture’s rejection of the gospel.

“In his spirit, Christ (in the past) proclaimed the gospel through Noah to the spirits (the souls of people) who are now in prison (they are in hell, because they did not believe Noah’s message).” (A Plausible Reading of 1 Peter 3:19)

- **What did Peter teach about baptism in verse 21?** The scripture clearly teaches in many places that baptism doesn’t save anyone, so why did Peter write, *“Baptism...now saves you.”*? I believe it is because baptism and salvation were so closely linked together that Peter was using shorthand (For example, if I said that Ashley and I exchanged rings at the altar when we were married it would be referring to our wedding. Did the rings make us man and wife? No, the relationship established before God and witnesses did, but the rings were a symbol just like baptism).
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What Do We Know? Even if you aren’t satisfied with these answers from these difficult passages (in fact, I’m not satisfied either). We can be confident...

Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, rules at the right hand of God, and is Lord over all creation!

We live in a world where we will face hard questions, difficult seasons, perplexing pain, and unjust realities. When we have questions we can’t find answers to, we must take the chance to exercise trust and dependence on God!

“The absence of clarity is an invitation to intimacy.” Vance Pitman

The Battle of Waterloo is one of the more famous in human history. It took place June 18, 1815 pitting the French Army (Napoleon Bonaparte) against the Anglo-German-Dutch forces led by the Duke of Wellington and others. One of the more interesting aspects of this historical account is how word got back to London about the outcome of this pivotable battle (there was no twitter, cable news, Instagram reels, radio, or TV). First, the word was carried by ship across the English Channel, then relayed by signal flags all the way to London’s Winchester Cathedral where the news was written on large flags for everyone to see for themselves. As the flags were hung over the side of the walls, the people clamored to read them...

W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D

But before the full message was displayed, a heavy London fog moved in and left the people believing that England lost this important fight and that Napoleon had won (which would have been devastating). Gloom filled the nation as the bad news spread rapidly. But when the fog lifted, the full message was clear and the nation exploded with joy over the defeat of one of the most dangerous enemies they had ever faced.

W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D T-H-E E-N-E-M-Y

Are you in Pain & Struggling to See the Purpose? Read the whole message

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:4 – Pain: Temporary/Purposeful

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *CSB Study Bible* – Trevin Wax, General Editor (2021)
- *Wiersbe Bible Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (2007)
- *Swindoll's Living Insights: James, 1& 2 Peter* – Charles R. Swindoll (2014)
- *1-2 Peter St. Andrew's Expositional Commentary* – R.C. Sproul (2011)
- *1&2 Peter, Jude: Sharing Christ's Sufferings* – Helm & Hughes (2008)
- *New American Commentary: 1&2 Peter, Jude* – Thomas Schreiner (2003)
- *MacArthur NT Commentary: 1 Peter* – John MacArthur (2004)
- *Notes from my Bible* – Dwight L. Moody (1895)
- *Tony Evans Study Bible* – Tony Evans (2019)
- *The Spurgeon Study Bible* – Charles Haddon Spurgeon (2017)
- *The Problem of Pain* – C.S. Lewis (1940)
- *How to Experience Good Days* – J.D. Greear (2020)