

Strange World Good God-8
“Blessed in Suffering”
1 Peter 4:12-19 ESV

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a moment as we do each and every Sunday to welcome our church family and our first time guests that are with us today...also say what's up to all of those who are watching online!

If you don't know me, my name is Pastor Mike, and I have the honor and privilege to preach and teach the word of God to you today...

We're in week 8 of our series in 1 Peter called "Strange World Good God." Peter wrote this letter about 30 years or so after the resurrection of Jesus, to Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, and who were being persecuted for their faith.

He's writing to encourage them...to give them hope...

That although they're living in a world that hates the One True God, and hates them because they choose to love and follow the One True God...

He's saying don't give up, don't give in...keep following Jesus...

Yes the world around you is against you, but God is for you...

Yes the world around you wants to hurt you, but God wants to heal you...

Yes the world around you hates you, but God loves you...

The Bible isn't about what happened...it's about what always happens...What was going on in 60AD is still going on in 2023...

My prayer as we finish up chapter 4 today is to encourage you...to give you hope...you may be going through a very difficult time...But you hold on...no matter how bad things get...

God is still good...He's still in control...He's never lost a battle...and one day He will make right everything that is wrong...He won't quit on you so don't you quit on Him!

One of the things I love about being a pastor is sharing the hope we have with people. Many of you have been part of NSC from the very beginning, and I've had the privilege and honor to be a part of your journey with Jesus...

I've prayed with many of you as you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior...

I've told you how proud I am of you as you took your next steps...As you got baptized in water, took Growth Track...took discipleship classes

Joined the dream team...joined a life group...
I've got the opportunity to walk some of you
through pre-marital classes, officiate your
wedding, and even dedicate your children to the
Lord...

I genuinely love what God has called me to do
and My life is good...really good! (Nacho voice)

But we all know and understand that life isn't
good all the time is it? There are challenges,
hang-ups, detours...there are pains and
problems that we go through...and suffering
that goes with those things...

Our team has really tried to do our best to walk
you through some of the most painful and
heartbreaking moments of your life...

Today, as we read our text, Peter's going to
take us into a deep dive on the topic of
suffering.

You're thinking "yay, why did I come to church today?"

Now the reason you think that, is because you don't like to suffer...and if you don't like to suffer then you're normal...if you like pain and suffering...we have prayer available right after service...I mean who wants to suffer?

So because we don't like to suffer, we don't like to talk about it...Nowadays with 24 hour news and social media...we have instant access to suffering not just here in the BX...but all over the world!

I was on X (formally Twitter) and in just a couple of scrolls saw a link to a video of a presidential candidate in Ecuador being assassinated, gosh don't wanna watch that...scroll wildfires in Hawaii...scroll 15 year old boy assaulted on BX 36 bus...Our world is full of suffering...

And here's the thing...people suffer whether they love Jesus or not...suffering is part of life And the Word of God doesn't shy away from it... It talks about it...and it says that we'll go through it...and so Peter's been telling us how we should react as Christians when it happens to us...He's mentioned suffering like 18 times already...

Don't be **SURPRISED** by suffering

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 1 Peter 4:12 (ESV)

Notice the word "beloved" in Peter's writing with the heart of a Pastor...and before he talks about how we should suffer...he wants us to know that we're loved...

He wants them to know that they're not just his friends, they're his flock...He loves them, and more importantly God loves them...

That's an important thing for us to remember because one of the first things we think when we feel the pain...is why is this happening?

Why am I going through this?

Why did I get stuck with this?

Why is this happening to us?

Did you ever stop to think that just because you know the reason why something happened, it doesn't change the fact that you still have to face it? You still have to go through it?

I broke my left arm twice, my left wrist once, and severed the tip of my left middle finger...now I know the reason why, but it didn't change the fact that I needed immediate medical attention...

Knowing why helps us to try to understand why we're going through what we're going through, but it doesn't fix it...

Now one of the oldest questions asked by mankind is why does suffering exist in the first place? The answers are as diverse as the people who ask them...

An atheist would say the universe is random... our world is a cold dark place, and when bad things happen it is what it is...

A Hindu will tell you that suffering exists in the world because of Karma...It's payback for the things you did in your previous life...

A Buddhist will tell you that suffering exists because of people's desires and their spiritual ignorance...we suffer because we're too attached to material things...

A Muslim will tell you that suffering exists so that people will submit to the will of Allah...if you do good...you will live with less suffering

Some people have taken these different points of view and mixed them altogether...

Suffering is systemic...it's a result of a system that has been built...Suffering is consequential...it's a result of your own actions

People think...if I live right then everything will be right...but the reality is that you can live right and still have everything go wrong!

What's a biblical view of suffering?

Suffering starts in Genesis 3 when our first parents Adam & Eve sinned and disobeyed God. That brought sin, death and a curse upon the whole world...

As a result we experience suffering...we experience sickness, disease, natural disasters...but it doesn't stop there

Sometimes we suffer because of the choices we make...it's a consequence for my actions...sometimes we suffer because of the choices other people make...consequences of their actions...

You may not like this very much...but sometimes we suffer because God is using that to bring us closer to Him...He's teaching us, He's molding us, He's pruning us, and He works things out ultimately for our good and His glory!

Peter's saying, when you find yourself in a painful situation...when you realize that something has happened that's making you wonder why...

Don't be surprised by it...Don't freak out...Remember, God is in complete control...It may be dark, but He's not at a distance...He's with you...

He's going to work it out...and don't think for one second that this is happening because God doesn't love you! You are loved by God point blank period!

Don't be surprised by suffering

Don't stop **WORSHIPING** because of suffering

13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. -1 Peter 4:13-14 ESV

Now I know you hear that and you're like yeah okay...worship while I'm suffering...What Peter's saying is that we have an opportunity to lift up the name of Jesus through our suffering...

In other words don't panic but praise!

Now, I don't know about you, but my first reaction to suffering isn't singing,
"You are good, all the time, all the time, You are good."

I don't usually sing, I usually sulk...I don't usually praise, I pout...I don't shout unto God...I just shout...

What about you? Okay God...I'm going through this so I'm not going to go to church today...I'm not going to serve...I'm not going give...I'm not going pray...not going to read my Bible...

Because I'm not feeling very blessed by You today God...No Peter says don't be surprised by the suffering...but instead let it be an opportunity to worship...

This is what Peter and the other apostles did in Acts 5...

God is using Peter in amazing ways...People are getting saved...Peter's so anointed by God that his shadow is healing people!

And the religious leaders get jealous and have them arrested and thrown in jail...An angel lets them out, they go right back to preaching...this time the religious leaders have them severely beaten for preaching Jesus...

So what did they do?

41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.-Acts 5:41 (NIV)

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas were on a missions trip and while in Philippi they got beaten and thrown into prison for preaching Jesus...

As they're sitting in a dark prison cell bruised and bleeding for doing the right thing...they didn't complain...they didn't quit...

They didn't say this isn't what I signed up for...they didn't deconstruct their faith...

You know what they did?

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.-Acts 16:25 (NIV)

They worshiped...They sang hymns to God!
Now if I'm the third guy in the cell...And Paul looks at me and says you wanna sing? I'm pretty sure my first reaction would be NO!

But maybe, just maybe Paul is teaching us that we can sing in the dark because God is in complete control...And when we decide to worship through it...others take notice...we become a witness for Jesus...

Wow...look at these crazy Christians worshiping Jesus as they're going through that!

Now if you know the story, you know that right after this, there was an earthquake, and the guard asks Paul...What must I do to be saved?

See how their worship was a testimony to others who don't know God? Now do you think that if Paul and Silas were complaining, and arguing, and whining about their suffering, that the jailer would have gotten saved?

I don't think so...but they decided to shine the light of Jesus in the darkness of their situation and their testimony led others to Jesus!

Jesus said...

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.-Matthew 5:11-12 (NIV)

James says...

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, [a] whenever you face trials of many kinds,

3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.-James 1:2-3 (NIV)

Now I'm not saying that this is an easy thing to do...but I'm learning that it's something I can do through the power of the Holy Spirit...

Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit to be our comforter...He comes alongside us in our suffering, and He helps us...He ministers to us...He comforts us...He gives us the strength to go through it!

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, but shouts in our pain” C.S. Lewis

Oftentimes...it's in the midst of suffering that people get closer to God...And we live in a fallen world...it's a strange world..but we serve a good God...who gives us the strength to get through it!

If you're in a storm right now...if you're suffering...if the outlook is bad...try the uplook...focus on Jesus!

Begin to worship Jesus...One day He's going to right every wrong...one day He's going to heal every hurt...one day He's going wipe away every tear...one day there will be no more pain or sorrow!

You keep worshiping...
But I don't see Him...He's there!
But I don't feel Him...He's there!
He's working it out!

Don't be surprised by suffering...It's going to happen

Don't stop worshiping God...He's going to bring you through it...

Don't suffer for the **WRONG** reasons

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

What Peter's saying is hey if you're going to suffer (and you will suffer) make sure you're suffering for the right reason...

As you walk through this strange world, you're going to get into trouble...

Make sure it's good trouble...make sure it's godly trouble...

Make sure you're suffering because you're a Christian...because you're Christlike...

Make sure that you're not suffering because you're continuing to sin...because you're continuing to disobey God...He lists a few examples...

Murderer...well I don't have to worry about that one...hold on there...Jesus said that if we hate another person we've committed murder in our heart...

Hate produces suffering doesn't it? Not just for the person we hate, but for us too...We suffer emotionally, physically and even spiritually because of that...

What Peter's saying is that our choices do have consequences...we reap what we sow...
If we sow evil...we're going to reap evil...and notice that he includes meddling in the list...

“the act of trying to change or have an influence on things that are not your responsibility, especially by criticizing in a damaging or annoying way:”-Cambridge English Dictionary

Why is Peter telling us this?

Because sometimes people don't suffer for Christ's sake but for stupidity's sake...

“Oh praise God...I'm being persecuted because I love Jesus...no, you're being persecuted because you were gossiping...or because you were criticizing...

Or because you were just being annoying...You were speaking the truth but not in love...And God doesn't get any glory from that...

17 For 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?

In other words...God is purifying us...He's using our suffering to bring us closer to Him...

18 And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”[c]

Now that doesn't mean like we're barely saved...Jesus saves us...but we still suffer in this world...we still go through things...so if our path is hard and we have to walk the narrow road as believers in this strange world...Imagine how horribly painful it will be for those who are far away from God...

As we're suffering we're keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus...We're worshiping through it all...but for those who are lost...this world is all they get their best day on this earth is all they have...

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.-1 Peter 4:14-19 (ESV)

Stop! Did I just read that right? Suffer according to God's will? You mean you can be in the perfect will of God and suffer? Yeah

Some people will say that if you're suffering it's because you're out of God's will...that's not always the case...

Remember Job? He was in the will of God and yet God allowed him to suffer. And what did his friends say to him? Bro...What did you do? Confess that sin!

Now I'm the first to admit that I've done a lot of dumb things in my life...things that were outside of the will of God and that have caused suffering to myself and other people...

But I've also been in the will of God...and struggled and even suffered. Sometimes we think that just because God's in it we won't have hardships...

Can I say that it's been my experience that when God is in it...It's harder? We're battling against powers and principalities...

All hell is upset that you're moving forward with God...yeah, there's going to be a conflict.

Moving to the BX 2009

Since 2009...We've had to move 7 times because of crooked landlords, crazy neighbors, and outrageous rent increases...

My son was mugged getting off the 44...

My daughter was assaulted on the 4 train...

My youngest daughter was constantly harassed in public school for simply being white...

I've had the swine flu, the flu flu, covid twice, my daughters have a rare blood disorder, my wife suffers from severe migraines...

Since 2009 we've lost close family members and friends to tragedies, sicknesses, diseases, and addiction...

We've been called names, lied about, and threatened...

You can be in the will of God and go through hardships, pains and suffering...go through persecutions, go through disappointments, go through trials and temptations...

Peter's not trying to scare us with suffering...he's trying to prepare us for it...that's what Jesus told him to do...

Remember, on the night that Peter denied and abandoned Jesus said to him...

Hey Peter, you're going to deny me, but when you come back to Me, I want you to strengthen your brothers...

That's what he's doing, he's not trying to scare us, he's trying to strengthen us...Don't quit...keep going!

So when you're suffering you

ENTRUST yourself to God

The word entrust means to put something into someone else's care...Peter says when you're suffering you need to entrust your soul...

What's that?

Your mind, your emotions, your will, your whole life, you need to put them in God's hands for safe keeping...

This is what we see Jesus doing in the garden...

He's suffering from severe anxiety because
He's about to go to the cross for our sins...

**41 He withdrew about a stone's throw
beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42
"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from
me; yet not my will, but yours be done."
43 An angel from heaven appeared to him
and strengthened him. 44 And being in
anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his
sweat was like drops of blood falling to the
ground.-Luke 22:41-44 (NIV)**

Jesus is in the center of God's will and yet
suffering...and what does He do? He entrusts
His will to God...

What would it look like if in the midst of suffering
we entrusted our marriages to God?

Entrusted our kids to God

Entrusted our finances to God

Entrusted our career to God

I can't tell you how many times over the years I've had a conversation with God and asked God why? Why is this happening? Why, why, why...everytime, I've just sense in my spirit...trust me...

That's what you need to do too...

God I don't understand it, but I'm going to trust You through it...I know You're in control...I'm yours...You love me, and I'm in Your hands...

Peter says God is our faithful creator...He's going to be with you every step of the way...and it may hurt now...but it's only temporary...

As we come to a close a couple of questions to consider...

Am I suffering? If yes, how am I suffering? Is it for the right reasons? Is it in the right way?

Who am I entrusting my soul to today?

If I'm suffering because of my faith...I'm truly blessed, and I know that my God loves me and He's for me, and He's working it out...

What's the Holy Spirit saying to you today?