

A Practical Study of 1 PETER:

Practice for Suffering Saints

“How Suffering Fits in the Father’s Plan”

Key Verse: 1 Peter 5:10

“But the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, shall himself make you complete, shall establish you, shall make you strong, shall ground you as on a foundation.”

Pattern Number Ten – Keep a Good Attitude – 1 Peter 4:12-19

Key Verse 4:16

I call this tenth pattern in Peter’s Playbook: Keeping a Good Attitude.

What I mean by this is, basically, one thing that the evil one delights in doing when we become Christians is:

1. destroy our confidence in the one who’s leading—he tried to do that with Eve in the Garden and was successful.

Then if he cannot destroy our confidence in the one who is

leading:

2. then he'll cause us to have all kinds of questions about the direction he is leading, so there's constant harassment.

The believer, who has really gotten ahold of it, never lets anything that life throws at him affect his attitude.

You find a consistency about a person who walks with God, he's always there.

He might not always be jumping up and down with enthusiasm because of all the exciting things that are happening but he knows one thing. And that is, when he woke up this morning, the smile of his father was there.

I made a commitment a few years ago that I would never greet a new day without saying "Good morning Lord!" and sensing His smile.

That means, sometimes at night there has to be some things taken care of before you go to sleep. You know he watches over you but that smile will be there. Remember we sang that this morning?

That smile upon His face, Was it there to greet you this morning? If it wasn't, you're the loser. You've missed something. There's nothing more thrilling and more fulfilling and more exciting, as far as you know in your life. You've dealt with the trash that would keep Him from smiling. And as far

as you're concerned, you're open with Him and His smile is there. That's the difference.

In keeping a good attitude, I'm afraid the world is saturated with so much. That it's so phony and so frothy and so unreal.

I mean by this that much of this power of positive thinking that's pervading and sweeping our country—there's nothing wrong with that. Believe in the best. Catch the vision. See it big and keep it simple! All of these little pep talks are things you can do in the flesh to pull up yourself by your own boot straps.

But Christians ought to be the ones out in front of that. And if we really believe God is alive and He's well and He's working in our lives, we ought to be the most positive people in the world.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. We have to see it real big and be excited about the part that we can play in it.

I went back over a lot of athletic statements that have been made in the past by successful athletes. And you'd be amazed at one tenor that goes through it all.

They saw it a thousand times before they did it. For instance, somebody asked Jim Brown on the day that he ran 232 yards how it went. And he says "All week long I saw myself doing my job and when the game came, I wasn't surprised."

That's keeping an attitude—knowing that he can do it.

Gene Tunney, when he KO'd Jack Dempsey with a left hook, said: "Ten thousand times before in my imagination I threw that hook."

You see what happens when worry gets in and depression gets in? Then you've got the opposite of success. You say, "Oh, I can't do that. Oh no, it's not for me. Oh no, that'll never work."

And you know, it's amazing how many Christians are like that. When you ask them to have a part, when you ask them what to do, or if they'll do it, they come up with some little excuse like that.

It was Emerson who said:

Man becomes what he thinks about all day long. Discipline the mind to see yourself doing your job and doing it well.
(source unknown)

Another writer said this:

Every time you say you can't or think you can't, you are preconditioning yourself to failure before you even start.
(source unknown)

Now that's stout stuff.

Every time you say you can't, you carry a parachute with you.

By simply saying “I told you so.”

I don't know if I can make it but I'll try anyway.

You see, with the right kind of attitude it's incredible what begins to happen in one's life.

I read a little book, I don't know if it's even in print any more. It was a book during my athletic years that I enjoyed so much.

Bob Richards, you know, some of you old duffs can remember when his smiling face was on the Wheaties box and he was our Olympian that traveled around the country and gave all these great, positive attitude talks and everything.

Well he wrote a book on the stories of the same great champions, because of their attitude what they were able to accomplish. And he says this:

The greatest baseball player who ever lived, according to my opinion, and some of you may disagree with me as to who that baseball player is, but I think of a boy who wasn't a natural, who had to do everything the hard way. As a boy he was fat and awkward. He just couldn't seem to do things the easy way. He made error upon error. The story goes that as a bungling kid he made an error and the winning run was scored against his team. One of his teammates came up to him and threw his glove down in front of him and said “for heavens sake, why don't you quit, you're always ruining our team.” The boy looked up and said, “I know I have made mistakes but I'm

going to make one less mistake every day and I'm going to accomplish something in baseball.

This boy tempted to give up in that minute of discouragement worked after hours. He began to practice his swing until he could hit the ball. He worked at first base until he could make the plays and to make the story short, that wobbly awkward kid hardened down to a rock. He made the New York Yankees baseball team, he played 2,130 consecutive ball games for the greatest record in baseball. He tied the great Babe Ruth in home runs in one year. He had a lifetime batting average of well over 300. I think in terms of spirit, attitude and determination, he was the greatest baseball player in history. His name was Lou Gehrig.

When you're discouraged, use Gehrig's philosophy and start by saying this, "I'm going to make one less mistake today."

(source unknown)

The reason we wake up with such a raunchy attitude and we're depressed and down is, we haven't put what happened yesterday behind us. When the past quarrels with the present, there can be no future. If you're letting the evil one cover you with bad press from the mistakes you made yesterday, no wonder you're so down! Shame on you! Believers ought to keep short account and when you close the day, shut the door and get on with tomorrow.

For believers, the first day of your life ought to be tomorrow morning. That's why Paul said "Forgetting those things which are behind, we press toward those things which are in front."

One thing I have grieved over is the fact that Napoleon Hill was not an evangelical believer. He is the fellow who writes to every businessman [in] *Think and Grow Rich*. And his whole principle is, you can make a lot of money if you think right. The trouble is with reading that book—and I did—not because I wanted to be rich but just because I wanted to see what makes a businessman tick because I minister to a lot of them.

I found myself saying “Amen!” to so many of his principles because the guy had obviously read the Bible sometime in his life.

Listen to what he says:

Through some strange and powerful principle of mental chemistry which he has never divulged, nature wraps up in the impulse of strong desire that something which recognizes no such word as impossible and accepts no such reality as failure. A long while ago a great warrior faced a situation which made it necessary for him to make a decision which insured his success on the battlefield. He was about to send his armies against a powerful foe whose men outnumbered his own. He loaded his soldiers into the boats, sailed to the enemy's country, unloaded the soldiers and equipment, then gave the order to burn the ships that had carried them. Addressing his men before the first battle he said, “See those boats going up in smoke? That means that we cannot leave the shores alive unless we win. We now have no choice, we win or we perish.” They won.

Every person who wins the undertaking must be willing to burn his ships and cut all sources of retreat. Only by so doing can one be sure of maintaining that state of mind known as a burning desire to win, essential to success.
(*Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, page unknown)

Of all people in the world that ought to have that burning gut desire to win, it ought to be Christians! And yet so many times we've let life overwhelm us! We've got all kinds of excuses for sitting on our duffs while the world burns! And we have no picture of the ramifications and evangelism, and touching people's lives while we're here now. Not waiting until we finally get ready.

You know, I've gotten kind of a fresh vision of what Peter's trying to say in 1 Peter. I never come and work through these books again, but God seems to catch me in a different way.

You know, we study the whole business of God's grace providing the gift of salvation. That was the beginning point.

But the second critical area is SUBMISSION. Am I really willing and ready to surrender the controls of my life to God—to let Him do whatever He wants to do.

If I don't pass the second test, I'm going to fail the third one. Because if I don't have a spirit of total resignation to the Father and to His will, I cannot suffer correctly and biblically.

We have already learned last time that suffering 101 is a

required course in the curriculum.

I want you to understand that because that's not preached in a day of the health-wealth-prosperity gospel. You know, we've got all these great promises about the warm fuzzies and the buzzes you're going to get and the successes you're going to have. We're preaching a distorted message!

Peter comes back and he tells us the truth. He tells us, "Look, when God puts His hand on you, He's going to make it rough."

One of the things He's going to do as a winning coach is to shape you up so that you're going to produce. He's not just going to let you put on a uniform and show up for the ballgame and get plastered all over the sidewalk, simply because you didn't discipline yourself by the things that needed to be done.

Now, when we get to verse 12, we are right there. So look at it carefully. Let's meditate and study on it, in view of what we've heard sung and the hymns we've sung.

This is the whole business when it comes to the matter of what we can expect as believers who are preparing to grow in our relationship to the Lord.

Look how he starts it. What?

v. 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which is coming upon you, as though something strange were happening to you;

“Beloved”—can you believe that?

Here’s the guy that said “precious.” Here’s the guy that said “beautiful.” Now he’s calling them “beloved.”

Doesn’t that really get you macho men sitting here? You just don’t think in those terms. Peter does. There’s been a drastic change in his life. He’s been tempered. He’s been softened. And he does have a deep, undergirding love for these people.

“Beloved” he says. And then he’s got a NEGATIVE statement here.

There’s a NEGATIVE in 12 and a positive in 13.

NEGATIVE: “[Beloved] do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which is coming upon you, [to test you] as though something strange were happening to you;”

He says “Hey look, its coming! Don’t think it’s strange! Don’t think it’s weird for a Christian to face this. This is part of the territory! You can count on it! Get ready for it! Buck up! Shape up! And hang in there. You’re going to have to face some of this.”

You’re worth your salt, God’s going to work on you.

Remember 1 Thessalonians chapter 3—I was sharing with you. Paul told the Thessalonians: “You’re destined for this. It’s a foregone conclusion. It’s going to happen.”

He says winter happens, don’t get surprised.

When you get surprised, what is it? It’s something you didn’t anticipate. Isn’t that the way a lot of suffering comes? You didn’t expect it! You didn’t anticipate it! You didn’t plan it! But, Oh goodness it happened! Now what am I going to do?

No. It happened. What’s God going to do? You’ll see immediately. When we think when a crisis happens in our lives, we got to take over. “What am I going to do?” And it’s that very moment you ought to come back to your second word, SUBMISSION, and say “Now what is God going to do to get us out of this one?”

You know, so often we have that feeling inside that, when it falls apart, we’ve got to do something about it.

I remember one time I was running, back many years ago, and I was running up a real long hill. And I wasn’t in very good shape. And so I was not only losing my wind but my cardiovascular was telling me that this was kind of a stress situation.

So I’m running along saying “Now what am I going to do?” Then I realized that wasn’t very spiritual so as I got halfway up the hill I said “Now, what are we going to do?” And when I

almost got to the top I said “Now, what is HE going to do?” I finally got to the place where he took me over the hill. And that’s really the progression in the Christian life—from “I” to “we” to “He.” When it gets on “He” and it’s your life is a demonstration of what he’s doing, then you’re ready to be used by God!

That’s John the Baptist: “He must continually be increasing, I must be decreasing.” Get out of the way.

When people meet you and when they see you, do they see what God is doing in your life? Or is what you’re trying to do with the mess that’s been left?

Peter says don’t get surprised. These things are going to happen.

Isaiah 43:2—wonderful, wonderful verse of scripture. Why? Listen to these words:

Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned. Neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

What’s the word? THROUGH! THROUGH! THROUGH!

You know, you can take the loop and avoid it but God says

THROUGH!

I'm going to go THROUGH the valley of the shadow of death with you! I'm going to go THROUGH the rivers! I'm going to go THROUGH the fire and you'll not be burned!

Because it's THROUGH these experiences that God is making you more like His Son.

I think that hymn writer was right.

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And [What?] sailed THROUGH bloody seas?

("Am I Soldier of the Cross" by Isaac Watts)

God never intended for you to have a "flowery bed of ease" to go to glory. But it's "through bloody seas" that we get there. Why? Because God gets maximum glory for going THROUGH IT, not keeping you FROM IT! Because you learn from it and God gets the glory in getting you through it. And He wants all the glory.

Donald Grey Barnhouse was a great old Presbyterian preacher. He died before the end of his life. He died before, what from our point of view, would have been the end of time for him. What a man. He could preach, illustrate, he had a photographic memory. He could just quote reams. And his

pulpit eloquence was incredible. I got to hear the old gentleman just before he died, at Dallas Seminary in one of our chapel services. And I'll always treasure that experience as that white-haired gentleman stood before us and expounded the Word of God.

He was a master illustrator. He could take any circumstance and he could turn it into a biblical illustration to tell you the truth. And so you could get a handle on it. This is what he says:

In Venezuela there are great iron mines from which ore is shipped to the largest iron works in the world near Philadelphia. If a man were to try to get iron out of ore with a hammer, he could not do it, because iron is a chemical union. The ore must go in to a great furnace. As the temperature rises the iron within the ore turns to liquid and the pure metal runs out. This is exactly how God works in your life and mine. This is why we must be salted with fire. You and I cannot hammer sin out of our lives, rather we must recognize that God loves us and will salt us with fire until the slag is burned away and only pure metal remains. So if you and I desire to be delivered from sin, we must be willing to go into the flame, there is no other way.
(source unknown)

Let not thy face grow dim dear Lord [God], nor sense of Thee depart.

Let not the memory of thy Word burn low within my heart.

Let not my spirit, Lord, grow numb through loneliness or fears.

Let not my heart to doubt succumb and keep my eyes from tears.

Let not the distance come between as months and years increase.

Let not the darkness close me in and let me not lose Thy peace.

Let not the pressure of the foe crush out my love for Thee.

Let not the tiredness and the woe eclipse Thy victory.

For Thy joy is my joy, and my hope Thy day.

And Thy kingdom gracious God, shall never [not] pass away.
(source unknown)

God meant for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to go through the fiery furnace. And God delivered them in the midst of it. And you can expect that God is going to turn up the heat.

When you make a commitment on this mountain to get serious about Him, I guarantee you, you're going to have opportunities when you get down the hill to demonstrate the fact that you can take it. And that you can get in there and learn the things that you need to learn because God has the right to test us! To refine us as His children! He wants to teach us to trust Him! And He also wants to demonstrate to us that He can triumph in any circumstance or situation.

So beloved, don't think it weird, don't think it strange, because of the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange

thing is happening unto you.

Verse 13.

v. 13 but inasmuch as you are sharing the sufferings of Christ, be rejoicing; in order that also at the revelation of His glory, you might shout for joy.

“but inasmuch as you are sharing the sufferings of Christ, be rejoicing; in order that also at the revelation of His glory, you might shout for joy.”

Doesn't it make suffering a little bit easier if you recognize that suffering is getting you ready for glory? I mean, the wonderful thing about the suffering part is, it's getting you ready to be comfortable over there! And that's the only reason a Christian can rejoice. Not because he's trying to perform and being phony or something of that sort. He rejoices in anticipation of the glory that's going to come.

Now you see the NEGATIVE in verse 12: “do not be surprised.”

And now the POSITIVE. We are those who are going to be: “sharing [in] the suffering of Christ” and we're rejoicing.

And the PURPOSE behind it: “also at the revelation of His glory, you might shout for joy.”

Are you going to be able to be a part of that group who is going

to really shout for joy, wave the palm branches of victory, throw your crowns at the feet of His throne? And say “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.”

What a glorious anticipation is ours.

You know, there’s a wonderful verse in Jeremiah 48 and verse 11 and it describes, I think, what God does with you and me. It brings a little comfort when the heat’s up and we’re having a hard time. Listen to this verse.

Jeremiah 48:11

Moab has been at ease from his youth and he has settled on his dregs and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste has remained in him and his scent has not changed.

Now if you had that verse in your devotions this morning, you probably would have said “Oh wow, it’s going to be a wonderful day.” But you’ve got to get the picture.

Here’s the picture of a country. He says Moab is like the United States, just really relaxing and enjoying their luxury. No pain. Just an awful lot of fun! Always turning up for the check at the end of the month! Things are going great! And he says they haven’t been POURED from “vessel to vessel.” So as a result, their taste has remained in them. And if you want to put it another way, everything has gone to pot.

Now let's use it this way. Do you have anything that you forgot to shake when it says on the bottle SHAKE WELL BEFORE USING? Pearl was anticipating my needs. When I'm running a good bit, she knows that I can drink about 2 or 3 glasses of grapefruit juice when I come in. I usually don't eat until around lunchtime. One nice thing about exercise is that it takes away your appetite and helps you reduce it. It does come back later in the day with greater intensity, but that is a healthy one. It's that first one, when you stuff yourself with so many calories early that running and exercise in the early in the day has a tendency to cause you to restrain.

Well she brought about 4 or 5 of these bottles of grapefruit juice to surprise me yesterday afternoon. And this morning when she opened one of those when I got back from running, she forgot to shake it. And if you've ever drank a bottle of grapefruit juice that's been sitting on the shelf for 6 months that hasn't been shaken, I want to tell you—it takes just like the rind of the grapefruit. I mean, it is sick city.

What does she need to do? She needed to shake well before serving! And that's what God does! He lets you sit around and stuff the Word of God into your heart. And you get all sour. You get critical. Anybody's that's doing anything, you don't like what they're doing so you go around and tell them. That's so many of these people. I pray, God shake them up a little. Shake them up a little so some of that scent will come out of them! And they'll start serving with a fragrance that demonstrates the glory of God.

You know, the best thing in your life is you get shook up good. And after getting shook up good, maybe you'll be useful a little bit.

Well many, many times we resist that whole process of letting Him shake us. And that's God's procedure with us here, so we can "shout with joy!"

"Praise the Lord!" we're going to say at the revelation of His glory.

Verse 14.

v. 14 If you are being reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you.

"If you are being reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you."

Isn't that wonderful? He starts talking about suffering. He starts talking about glory. He starts talking about victory. He starts talking about the things that really mean a lot.

What do you think he's thinking about when he says "the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you."

I think he goes back to that day on Pentecost, the Spirit of God and rested upon them like flames of fire! And that day he

never forgot it was a “Spirit of glory” and a Spirit of power and he surprised himself with the message that was preached.

A dumb fisherman stands up and incredibly marks the religious community by the message that he gave. That was a “Spirit of glory,” the “Spirit of power” that was resting upon him. And I think it’s in the back of that statement.

Verse 15.

v. 15 For let not one of you be suffering as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters;

“For let not one of you be suffering as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters;”

Peter says there is a legitimate suffering that we bring on ourselves when we do something and we deserve it and we suffer legitimately.

And here he says “See to it that you aren’t like that!” The only joy that comes in suffering is when suffering is not deserved and you know God’s using it to shake us up and make us like His Son.

Verse 16.

v. 16 but if one is suffering as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him be glorifying God in this name.

“but if one is suffering as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him be glorifying God in this name.”

That’s keeping a good attitude. There’s your KEY VERSE to this study.

The wheels come off and the wagon turns over! It doesn’t look like you’re going any further! Can you glorify God in the midst of that?

You still keep your song! You’re still able to say “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Who has caused us to be born again to a living hope!”

That’s what Peter’s saying! A triumphant Christian is one who is suffering. Don’t be ashamed when you’re suffering. Let’s be “glorifying God in this name.”

Now one of the things you see in the book of Acts is that testimony indelibly inscribed in almost every experience of suffering.

There’s an incredible circumstance in Acts 5 when the Sanhedrin meets. And when they meet, they decide that they’re going to reproach Peter and John for what they’re doing. And they bring them in and tell them, “Look, you guys

shut up and stop this preaching about Jesus!” And then they had them whipped. And what did they do? It says, after they commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go, they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

They could have this glorious privilege of suffering for the cause of Christ.

In Romans 1:16 Paul says:

Romans 1:16

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believe...

2 Timothy 1:12

For which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

How can you glorify God in your suffering?

The 3 A's will always cause you to come up glorifying Him

1. He's ALIVE so He knows what's happening!

2. He's ADEQUATE—He'll take me through it!
3. He's ALLOWING it, for there's some purpose involved!

Just get those 3 A's down and you'll always come up glorifying the Lord, no matter what happens. He's alive so He's aware. He's adequate. He'll carry me through it. And He allowed it. I don't understand it but He's going to use it for His glory.

Keep a good attitude.

Remember Paul and Silas? They got this great vision to go to Macedonia. They get to Macedonia, they'd heard a man say "Come and help us!" And the only person they meet when they get over there is a lady by the name of Lydia. Where were the men?

After they went down to the prayer meeting with the ladies at the river, they were invited to come home and enjoy hospitality at Lydia's house because her heart was open before God.

Out of that little group, a few days later, they're harassed by a maiden who was demon possessed. They deliver that little girl. And as a result, they're publically whipped in the square. Their backs are gaping wounds. They're thrown deep in the dungeon.

The one thing I love about that though that a lot of people

leave out is that happened in the middle of the day and it wasn't until midnight 'til he started to sing! And they're just like you and me. So many times, it takes time after the sting of the trial hits until we can get it together and sing. But O God, help us to praise Him in the midst of unexplainable circumstances.

There are two things you learn about that. When they started to sing, God started to work. And when they started to sing, evangelism took place. The jailer about came unglued and the rest of the prisoners heard them praising God.

You see, this is the way God works. So we can't expect to come into His program and tell Him how to evangelize the world.

We truly mean it that we are just vessels to be placed into His hands, to be used, then we must learn the crisis of submission and then allow Him to do what He wants to do!

Would you expect any less if the Father chose, in order to make the plan of salvation possible, to give His Son to suffer physical death? That He would do any less with you and me who name the name of Christ and want to serve Him?

Suffering has always been a consistent part of the Father's plan to constantly remind us of sin and the consequences of it.

And yet He knows that in the crucible of suffering, He can soften us and make us productive for the glory of God.

So therefore, I don't have to defend God's program. But I do have to be faithful to tell you that you are going to suffer. And when you come with a smile on your face and you're still joyful in the midst of it, you're going to be a witness for Him! And God is going to use that.

You see, Peter and Paul and the other apostles—when they were suffering—were joyful Christians. They were not ashamed! They were glorifying God in the midst of all of it.

I raised this question in my notes:

Can we face the challenge to follow this pattern that Peter has outlined for us to practice? Keeping an attitude no matter what happens in the face of discouragement, difficulty, defeat, dismay and despair?

Remember what Peter says to these suffering saints?

“but if one is suffering as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him be glorifying God in this name.”

G. Coleman Luck wrote a little commentary on Philippians. When he got to this verse, this is what he says:

In contrast with suffering for misdeeds, there is another type which is altogether different, to suffer as a Christian. This means to suffer when we have done nothing amiss but have simply made a faithful stand for Christ. In such a case we should not be ashamed but rather glorify God. Peter himself

had once been ashamed to suffer as a Christian and had sadly denied his Lord. The lesson has been well learned and according to strong testimony from early church writers he eventually did not hesitate to suffer even death itself and that by crucifixion as he courageously witnessed for [the cause of Jesus] Christ.

(source unknown)

Wouldn't you have loved to been at the scene of execution? Wouldn't you have loved to have heard some of Peter's last word before he made that final commitment and laid down his life? Do you think he was practicing some of his own stuff?

I want to tell you, I'll bet you he was singing the doxology because of his love for Jesus Christ, he knew he was just a few minutes away from being in His presence and he was ready to go and see his Lord.

Verse 17.

v. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what shall be the end of those who are not obeying the gospel of God?

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what shall be the end of those who are not obeying the gospel of God?”

Whooo! That's a sobering verse. It's time for judgment to begin

at the house of God! Why? We need to be judged.

You're going to celebrate communion. Maybe you're not going to want to. Do you want to? You're saying, yes I want to. Well, then examine yourself.

The scripture says judge ourselves, examine ourselves to see if there's any aroma of offense. Because a person who doesn't judge himself, eats and drinks judgment unto himself! If we would examine ourselves then we wouldn't be judged!

God allows us as believers to judge things in our lives that are not right! When we don't deal with those things in our lives that are not right, then God does it! By taking us to the woodshed!

He creates the circumstances so we can lovingly take care of the problem that's an offense to Him.

He stirs up the circumstances around us to show us, this is what I don't like in your life! And then we've got the prerogative to judge it and cut it out! But we don't do it, huh?

So God says "Come on my rebellious little child. We're going to the woodshed to apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge and you're going to sing the stars and stripes forever for a while! And your colors are going to black and blue."

That's the way God works! You keep fighting and you don't deal with it, He is going to finally say "Hey! I'm blowing the whistle and pulling the chain! You're coming to the house! I can't leave you down there any longer. You're not a glory to me."

God means business. Judgment ought to begin at the house of the Lord! And oh, if a verse of scripture ought to be indelibly inscribed over every doorpost of every church, it is this! We have drifted far and we've refused to judge and we excuse and we blame. And we say "everybody else is at fault!" instead of saying "Woah is me, for I am undone! I am the problem!"

You know, too many times we're looking around for the problem and it's so close, it's right under our nose. We are it!

Wasn't it Pogo who said that? "We found the enemy and we are it!" And that's a hard thing to say! The more we start saying it, things really begin to happen and turn around.

Now what does it mean "judgment to begin at the house of God"? We as believers are going to face judgment before the world faces judgment.

In the prophetic chronology, believers are going to get a computer printout on their lives from the minute they're born again until the day they die at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10—we all appear there. We're examined for our works as believers and reward is based upon that.

Just like we're going to examine the records this afternoon of all of your performances. We're going to evaluate your week. We're going to have a time of reward and ceremony tonight! In view of your performance and your activity—that's what God's going to do to the believer.

But then we're going to have a thousand-year reign of Christ here on earth to fulfil the Davidic covenant that Jesus Christ will sit upon the throne of his father David. And He'll rule and reign for a thousand year. We're going to rule and reign for him. The nation Israel is going to be restored. There's going to be a kingdom of righteousness—what a joy.

But at the end of that, there's going to be the Great White Thorne Judgment. And at that judgment, that's what's going to happen to those who did not receive Jesus Christ.

In Revelation chapter 20—Oh boy, listen to these words:

Revelation 20:11-15

I saw a great white throne, and one seated upon it, from whose presence both earth and sky fled and vanished. And I saw the dead great and small standing before the throne and the books were opened and another book was opened which is the book of life and the dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they

had done. And the sea gave up its dead and death and the grave gave up the dead which were in them and men were judged, every one according to what he had done. Then death and the grave were themselves hurled in to the lake of fire which is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

I'll tell you, if you show up at the GWT [Great White Throne] it's too late. God's going to take out this great big BOOK OF LIFE where the names of all of those who have received Jesus Christ are inscribed in. And he's going to say "What did you say your name was? Don Anderson? Ok, let me look in the A's I've gone through all the A's, I don't see any Anderson." I already knew that. I'm standing here because I lived. I had an opportunity to seek Christ, but I rejected Him. So I know You're just in what you're doing.

Oh, but you said, your good works are going to get you here! Let's, one last thing, let's just examine all your good works and see if there was adequate basis for the possibility of a mistake!

And the whole life is unrolled and becomes just condemnation for the eternal torment is second death.

That's what's going to happen to those who refuse to obey the gospel of God.

Verse 18.

v. 18 And if he who is righteous is with difficulty being saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?

“And if he who is righteous is with difficulty being saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?”

Now doesn't that verse tell you that if you're saved, it's going to be “with difficulty”?

It doesn't mean “with difficulty” you're earning your salvation. It means that “difficulty” accompanies salvation. It's a foregone conclusion you're going to have tough times.

The only way strength is developed is by endurance. And consistence stress will produce endurance that's capable of doing what needs to be done.

I had so much fun with my son in April. Doug and Sarah knew the handwriting was on the wall with regard to my hip a couple of years ago so Doug gave me one of his racing bikes and said “Here, start riding this. I think you'll get farther and it'll be easier.”

And I thought, not me. Cardiovascular down the drain. I've been running all these years. I can't take that.

Well, I got the joy of riding in one of these races. We went to the “Hotter than H” race up in Wichita Falls last August and rode 25 miles with my grandson and I got the bug.

But I'm telling you, after those 25 miles my legs were cramped and I was ready to die in a pile. And I thought, this has got to stop. My son even beat me with my grandson on the back of his bike. So I figured I'm going to fix this guy.

Well in Tyler on April 9th they had the "Beauty and the Beast." The Beast is this one gigantic hill that's just clear out of sight in the 100 mile part of it. I said, I'm just going to sign up Bobby and I for the 50 mile deal. This is going to be fun. We won't have to ride the Beast.

If you've ever been in East Texas, there's lots of little beasts and they're all over the place. Well I want to tell you, I knew that if I was going to make a credible performance for him, I had learned through my marathon training years before, that you demonstrate on race day what you've been doing and what you've been learning in endurance on those quiet mornings when you have run by yourself those 10 and 15 and 20 milers that nobody knows anything about.

So I decided I'm going to get on that Schwinn Aerodyne and I'm going to beat my tail on that thing every morning. I'm going to build it up to an hour of stressful riding, so that when he comes, he is going to be eating my smoke.

I want to tell you, that kid was incredibly impressed when we crossed the finish line in 3 hours and 40 minutes and he was about 600 yards behind me after running the last hill. Of course I oiled my bike and pumped the tires to 90 lbs. each

and did everything I was supposed to do. Man I had the thing tuned to the finest it could be. And there was fulfillment in that.

What did I learn and what did I do? I simply in private disciplined myself to prepare for what was happening.

The thing that's most important in the life of the Christian is what people don't see. And that's your consistent time in the Word of God and prayer!

If you don't have that you might as well forget it.

Pearl has a little statement in her office that haunts the fire out of me. It says "A man who has failed to pray limits himself to his own resources."

I mean, you don't ever go into ministry without talking to God and laying your heart bare for Him! And you know there's a battle.

"he who is righteous is with difficulty being saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?"

Because he wants to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow he dies. He's living for the here and now! It's joy and comfort and warm fuzzies! He doesn't want any stress! He wants health, wealth and prosperity! He wants a piece of the action without paying the price! He wants all the glory without the gory and God doesn't work that way.

He wants the CROWN without the CROSS, too. He wants the SAVIOR without the SACRIFICE.

But there is no gospel like that! They all go together. The “righteous [are] being saved” while going through difficulty and testing, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? The Great White Throne Judgment is where they all appear.

Verse 19.

v. 19 Therefore, also let those who are suffering according to the will of God be entrusting their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

“Therefore, also let those who are suffering according to the will of God be entrusting their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

Are you in a crucible today? What are you supposed to do, according to that verse?

1. Trust yourself to God and
2. Don't ever stop serving—continue to do good. The minute you stop serving, you get bitter and resentful and selfish! But if you want healing for your suffering, turn around and serve somebody else and you find immediately somebody's got it worse than you do! And it will always

turn out better and it will help you maintain that good attitude.

God is working all things together for good to those that love Him and who are called according to His purpose.

We all get down, don't we, when suffering comes?

Psalm 42:5

Why art thou cast down, O my soul Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.

Psalm 42:11

Why art thou cast down, O my soul And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

Talk to yourself. Keep your good attitude. Just keep telling God that you love Him and you praise Him!

I ain't done yet, so don't fold up your papers. I've got a few things I've got to say yet.

This is my last shot coming up here this afternoon and I've got to get it all said. If I haven't said it, you aren't going to hear it. But I've got to stay here to lunch. It's my turn. Alright. Shape

up! Take your suffering. Look at me straight in the face.

A lot of times if you'll just simply remember, that the crucible you're in right now is only temporary. And God is going to use it.

Pearl has a great way of getting out of it. She says "This too shall pass." I love that. It's almost like, "So what? Big deal!"

The wheels have come off, the wagon's turned over, we're going to get out of this. It's going to be alright. Everything's going to be fine. Why? She's always pointing to the future.

In the midst of it, you want victory. And you'll realize that it's temporary.

Talk to yourself. Keep a good attitude. I love that statement: "The opera ain't over till the fat lady sings!" Boy that says it!

I may be down but I'm not out!

Take Philippians 4:6-8:

We've been hassled, we've been under pressure, but we haven't folded. We've been knocked down but not knocked out. We're always going through it but never going under.

O boy I love that! Always going THROUGH it but never going UNDER it.

Oh boy I love that!

Always going through it but never going under it.

You just see a believer fighting another round.

What a witness for Him.

Romans 8:18

What we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later.

That was my favorite marathon verse. It got quoted by Doug and a few others.

What we're suffering now is nothing worthy to the shower and Gatorade later! That's the joy of the finish!

And one thing you've got to learn in life, is the greatest thing you can do is finish.

I've had a very emotional week. I've been up here for 10 or 15 years now running these family camps. And I've always greeted every morning with the prerogative of running 6 miles to Buena Vista. It's been my joy.

This morning I ran my last trip. It was emotional.

The fellow who was running with me reminded me of my book

on Ecclesiastes where I quote *Necessary Losses*. I have to practice some of my own stuff. I've got to turn in my running shoes. Because this time next year I'll have a brand new total hip replace that will not allow me to run anymore.

And that's tough medicine when you've enjoyed something all your life so much, you let go of it.

One thing I can say is God allowed me to teach 2 Corinthians 12 this year. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. And he asked God three times to deliver him from it. He tried everything to get out of it—and I have tried everything in the last 3 years to escape the reality of a total hip deterioration. And there's no way out.

I've even gone to Cooper's clinic hoping that the running doctors would give me a different prognosis. And they gave me the same thing the other ones did. So it's all over. But I've learned one thing, Paul said "I will rejoice in my weakness." Because it's at that point that His grace is made perfect.

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me!"

One thing that's going to happen, I'm going to have more fun with Jacob than anybody else. Because he and I are going to talk this hip action out, when we're together.

God has the right to do what He wants to do. He's got other ways of getting me cared for and helping me finish my race

without putting my running shoes on every morning and enjoying something I've enjoyed for years. Who am I to question what He wants to do?

We're going to find out by this time next year what somebody can do with a total hip replacement. I'm telling you that, I ain't quitting. I'll see you here. If I find a running doctor that says I can run with a total hip replacement, I'll be out there with my shoes. You can count on that.

What are the lessons we got out of this? I got five.

Lesson #1: A tough mental attitude comes through endurance.

A tough mental attitude comes through endurance. And God just uses it.

We've got to have something to endure and when we endure it, a tough mental attitude begins to result.

Lesson #2: God is at work in our suffering.

God is at work in our suffering.

Lesson #3: Suffering now is getting you ready for the revelation of His glory.

Suffering now is getting you ready for the revelation of His glory.

You want to do something? Read Hebrews 11. Every one of those guys in Hebrews 11 has got something to talk about for what they went through.

And do you want to go to heaven without something to talk about? I mean, you're going to have to sit around and listen to these guys that have been fed to the lions. And they're going to say "What did you go through?"

You'll say "Oh well, one of my kids rebelled."

Boy that's going to make an impact isn't it?! Oh wow!

Those saints are going to say "Where's your scars?"

That reminds me of something. You've got to have the scars before you see the stars. I really believe that.

Lesson #4: We are to glorify God in the midst of our suffering.

Lesson #5: We are to trust God and keep suffering in the midst of our suffering.

PATTERN NUMBER TEN - KEEP A GOOD ATTITUDE —

1 PETER 4:12-19

KEY VERSE 4:16

v.12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which is coming upon you, as though something strange were happening to you;

v.13 but inasmuch as you are sharing the sufferings of Christ, be rejoicing; in order that also at the revelation of His glory, you might shout for joy.

v.14 If you are being reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you.

v.15 For let not one of you be suffering as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or as a meddler in other men's matters;

v.16 but if one is suffering as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him be glorifying God in this name.

v.17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what shall be the end of those who are not obeying the gospel of God?

v.18 And if he who is righteous is with difficulty being saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?

v.19 Therefore, also let those who are suffering according to the will of God be entrusting their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What is the purpose for the “fiery ordeal” in verse 12?

3. What should be our attitude in the midst of these sufferings, according to verse 13?

4. Why are we “blessed” in verse 14?

5. What does Peter mean by the words, “meddler in other men’s matters”?

6. What should be our attitude if we are suffering as a Christian, according to verse 16?

7. Where is judgment beginning, according to verse 17?

8. What two things does Peter ask of “those who are suffering according to the will of God” in verse 19?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: A tough mental attitude comes through endurance.

LESSON #2: God is at work in our suffering.

LESSON #3: Suffering now is getting you ready for the revelation of His glory.

LESSON #4: We are to glorify God in the midst of our suffering.

LESSON #5: We are to trust God and keep serving in the midst of our suffering.