

The Suffering Christian (3)

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] Our study of God's Word today is from 1 Peter 1 and verse 3. We've been looking for a couple of weeks at the way Peter deals with the issue of suffering in the Christian life and some of the issues that we've seen so far have to do with the mindset that he sets out as necessary for us to understand something, first of all, about it and its place in the Christian life.

And we've seen two things. Firstly, that it's not misplaced, as we've seen from a passage in chapter 4 and the last time how he speaks about it here in chapter 1 as necessary in verse 6.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary. And the necessity of that suffering we saw as something that is in the purpose of God and not misplaced, of ultimate benefit to God's people.

And today we want to look at some of the ways in which Peter sees other issues, other topics, other important matters in the Christian life related to that suffering.

And we're looking at it firstly as the Christian hope. Other things that he mentions, of time we'll see in later studies, that's to do with other things that are related to these sufferings of these Christians, such as the sufferings of Jesus himself.

[1 : 2 8] A couple of times throughout the letter, the sufferings of Christ are brought into very close proximity and connection to how we experience suffering and trial and difficulty in the Christian life as well.

But today we're looking at it in terms of the connection between suffering as a Christian, particular sufferings and trials that you have as a Christian, and our Christian hope.

That's what he's saying here in verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And he goes on from there to an inheritance that's incorruptible, undefiled and unfading. And as we've said, he goes on to speak about the necessity of the suffering. So you can see in that passage itself how the sufferings, as they're mentioned there as necessary, are actually brought into connection with the hope that God has given to his people, and particularly that hope that's connected itself to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now Peter is doing two very important things here for us. He's first of all tracing all things back to God. All things to do with his experience, all things to do with the place of suffering in his life as a Christian.

[2 : 5 9] He's tracing all of that back to God. He's beginning there. This is where Peter knows he has to start. He doesn't start with the suffering itself. He doesn't start with his own experience in itself.

He starts with God. He starts with what God is. He starts with who he is. He starts with what he's done. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

That's what he takes things back to. That's where he begins his thoughts. Now of course, we don't have time to go into the theology of how God is referred to there as the Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is an amazing thing that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, as he lived in this life having taken out human nature to himself, he actually lived in such a relationship with God the Father, as at times prayed to him, praised him, gave thanks to him.

And that's very difficult for us to understand how a person of the Godhead can actually, even through a human nature, come to give thanks to another person of the Godhead and live, in terms of the life Jesus lived as a servant in this world, live in dependence upon that God who sent him into the world and lived so as to carry out the will of the Father and to finish the work that he had given him to do.

[4 : 32] That's just dipping slightly into it, but it's a wonderful subject in itself to open up and to just look at that wonderful relationship between Jesus and his Father, as mentioned in the Gospels, especially at John's Gospel.

But what we're looking at here is how everything in terms of Peter's view of suffering and Peter's idea of the necessity of that suffering, you trace it all back to God.

Blessed be God. Where do you go with your trials? Where do you go with trying to understand what's happening in your life? Where do you go with looking for the answers that you and I are sometimes looking for, even if we know deep down that there isn't an answer to everything that we have as a question?

You go back to God. You trace them back to the one who presides over everything, whose will determines everything in the way he has purposed whatsoever comes to pass in our experience.

And so Peter is saying, that's when I'm beginning. As I write to you people who are suffering, as I write this letter to you, I want you to think, firstly, he's saying to them, of how all things begin with God and how that's the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 53] That's where you begin to look at what's happening in your life. How does it relate to God? How does your understanding of God help you then with your understanding of what's happening in your life?

But there's something else. He's not just tracing it back to God. He's doing something else in that which is so challenging for us. He's not just tracing it back to God, going back to God and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's saying, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, he is going back to God. He's beginning his thoughts with God and who he is and what he's done.

But he's doing it with praise. He's taking this to God, thankfully. He's tracing this back to the God who is the fountain of all wisdom and who is himself the governor of the whole universe.

But he's not saying, I must take this back to God. But until I understand everything, I'm not going to thank him for these sufferings or for the way that they're placed in my life or the purpose that God has in them.

[7 : 07] No, he's saying, blessed be God. Blessed be God. It's very difficult at times, particularly when the suffering is acute, when it involves much pain of heart.

It's very difficult to think then of praising God. Only by the grace of God can we do it. We understand that Charles Darwin became the originator of the thoughts of evolution as it's developed into.

He was brought up with the gospel. He was brought up in a Christian setting. He was brought up to know the teaching of the Bible. And yet it was through the death of his young daughter at seven, I think it was, that he turned his back on God and said he was finished with that whole religion thing and with this Christian God.

It's difficult at times to praise the Lord. But the alternative is to live without him. The alternative is to put him out of the picture altogether.

Where does that get us? Peter is saying, no, you trace it back to God. You trace everything back to him as the one who is indeed above everything that happens in your life.

[8 : 47] Whose will has actually brought this to you in his wisdom. Difficult though it may be to understand at times. Impossible though it may be at times to fully really get into the why and the wherefore of it.

But Peter is saying, blessed be this God. And when you go to other places in the Bible, you understand that that's something we should pray for constantly.

For grace to help us to keep on praising God. To keep on giving thanks to God that he knows what he's doing. That he is wise.

That his wisdom is never actually in any way short of perfect. You remember Job. In the book of Job in the Old Testament.

It's a book largely to do with suffering in a believer's life. There are many passages in the book of Job that are extremely difficult to really understand fully.

[9 : 48] And to get to the actual inner meaning of. But there are other parts of it that are quite clear. And in the early chapters you find that Job suffers such great losses. Including the loss of his family and his health and his goods.

All the things that he had as a man of wealth. They were taken off him and he lost his health as well. And he sat down on an ash heap. Scraping himself on the boils that covered his body.

And what did he say when news of bereavement and tragedy and loss came to him? And he said the Lord has given.

And the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And then in the next chapter you find that Satan who is a feature in all these early chapters of Job.

And therefore all the way through the book you understand that he's behind the temptations. And the things that are being thrown at Job for him to actually come and turn around and accuse God.

[10 : 50] Well here is his wife being used in that way. And she comes to him and said. Will you not curse God and die? Get this done with. Curse God and die.

Be done with him. Look at what's happened in your life. You were so wealthy once. You had all of these things. You lived a good life. What was the point in trusting God? Look now what's happened.

Where's that got you? Just curse God and die. And of course that's what the devil's aim was all along. That's what he said to God in these opening chapters of the book of Job.

Where you find Job in dialogue with God. Where he says I can't get at Job. Why don't you remove your guardianship from him to a degree. So that I get access to him.

And when he has lost some of the things he now has. He will curse you to your face. Instead of that God was blessed and praised by Job.

[11 : 48] Satan says think of God being cruel. Think of God depriving you of things which were precious to you. And just curse him. And Job says blessed be God.

He gives. He takes away. He remains blessed. He remains worthy of praise. Robert Murray McChain who was a great Christian minister in Scotland in the 1800s.

And died as a relatively young man. But was known in his days as a man of eminent holiness of life. Everybody spoke about McChain as a holy man.

As a man of God. And this is what he wrote in one of his. Or said in one of his writings. Your afflictions may only prove. That you are more immediately under the father's hand.

There is no time that the patient. Is such an object of tender interest to the surgeon. As when he is bleeding beneath his knife. So you may be sure.

[12 : 54] If you are suffering from the hand of a reconciled God. That his eye. Is all the more bent towards you. There is McChain a man who knew affliction and suffering himself.

Yet that is exactly what he is doing. When you trace all things back to God. And you actually look into the face as he put it off. A reconciled God. Then be sure.

That he will use your sufferings. And your trials for your benefit. And not against you. As Job. As we have seen discovered. So first of all.

That is the first thing that Peter is doing. And he is teaching us. To trace all things back to God. And to do so. In a way that retains. Our view of God.

That is worthy of our praise. Come what may. As the psalmist begins Psalm 34. For example. The same sort of idea. I will bless the Lord. At all times.

[13 : 54] What a great challenge that is. Did he live up to it himself? Possibly not. But that was his resolve. That was what he knew.

Was a proper attitude and mindset. To living in relationship with God. Not. God is good.

When I am feeling good. When I am comfortable. When I don't have anxieties. Or challenges. In my life. But God is good.

Even in those things. He doesn't become bad. Because he allows suffering. Into our experience. Trace it back.

To God. And he is doing it. With thanksgiving. And that really. Filters into the next. Or flows into the next point. Which is. The second way. That Peter. Is thanking God.

[14 : 49] For that living hope. We have seen how he is saying. Blessed be God. But blessed be God. Who according to his great mercy. Has caused us to be born again.

To a living hope. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the dead. Now let's look just briefly. At some of the main points in that. His great mercy. What Peter is doing.

Is going towards the subject of suffering. Beginning with God. But now coming to give thanks. Particularly for the hope. That God has given to his people.

And how that hope is connected. To the resurrection of Christ. His great mercy first of all. It is. A description really.

Of where God's choice of action. Comes from. The mercy. Of God. God. It is. It is. In mercy.

[15 : 45] That God provides. Forgiveness for us. That he provides. Salvation for us. That he provides. The things that we need to have. In order to be.

Right with him. To be approved of by him. And the very. Word. Mercy. Itself. Tells you. And implies. In itself. That God need not do this.

If you're merciful to someone. It doesn't mean that that person. Is deserving of what you're going to do for them. The very word. Mercy. Itself.

Implies. That the person does not deserve. The mercy means. You're dealing with someone. Who does not deserve to be treated well. And yet.

You treat them well. Because you're merciful. Because mercy. Is something that shows. An attitude. And an action.

[16 : 39] To someone. Who does not deserve it. And how that is true of God. And ourselves. Especially. Psalm 130. Captures it so well. As we quote so often.

Lord if you were to mark iniquity. Now you see. He's saying in that. If you were to mark iniquity. And the understanding is. As would be right for you to do. If you were going to mark this on my record.

Permanently. Who could stand? Where would I be? But. There is forgiveness. Or mercy.

With you. You know. You only appreciate mercy. When you're aware of something. That needs to be forgiven. It's true on the human level.

Whenever we realize. That. Something there needs to be confessed. To someone else. That we've done wrong. That we seek their forgiveness. It's then that you appreciate mercy.

[17 : 40] That the person. Will regard your request. With. Understanding. With pity. With mercy. With an acceptance. Of your repentance. So as to actually.

Bring forgiveness to you. And close the situation out. That's how it is with God. That's how it is. When you come in fact. To. Confess your sins to God. There is an appreciation.

In your appeal. To mercy. There is an appreciation. That there is mercy. There for you. Psalm 51. One of the great prayers.

Of repentance. In the whole Bible. David repenting. Of the sin. That he has come to realize. So closely. So much in his heart. That he had never realized.

Until it was brought home to him. There he is. How does he begin his prayer. For forgiveness. According. To your abundant mercy.

[18 : 37] Lord pardon my iniquity. Daniel is the same. In his great prayer. Of chapter 9.

Which is a wonderful prayer. Of confession. And seeking. Forgiveness. Not just for himself. Remember. Daniel was praying. For his people. He was actually praying.

As one of those people. Even though he had not been. Directly himself involved. In the sin. That led to the people's exile. And captivity. In Babylon. And yet this is how he comes in.

Chapter 9. To pray. In verse 5. For example. We have sinned. And we have done wrong. And we have acted wickedly. And rebelled. Turning aside from your commandments. And your rule.

Verse 9. He has the same. To the Lord. Our God. Belong. Mercy. And forgiveness. For we have rebelled. Against him. And then he closes out the prayer.

[19 : 33] In verses 18 and 19. There. Oh my God. Incline your ear. And hear. Open your eyes. And see. Our desolations. For we do not present.

Our pleas before you. Because of our righteousness. But because of your. Great mercy. He realizes.

Lord. We don't have a place to stand. If we are going to seek. In any way. To say to you. We deserve to be treated lightly.

We deserve to be treated. Forgivingly. We don't have. Any such argument. But we have your mercy. We appeal to your mercy.

And because you are a merciful God. Lord. Please forgive our sins. That's what you come to realize. When you come to realize. Your sin.

[20 : 29] Nothing. Nothing. Is more precious to you. Than the fact that there is. Mercy with God. The fact that he is a merciful God. The fact. Without which.

You and I. Would not have a hope. Of ever coming. To be accepted with God. And the confession. The catechism. In the question. That deals with repentance.

What is repentance? One of the phrases. In that is that. A sinner. In turning from sin. Unto God. Does so. Upon apprehension.

Of the mercy. Of God. In Christ. Have we made. Advantage. You and I.

Of this great fact. That there is mercy. That there is mercy. With God. Have we come to realize. Our need of mercy. Have we come to realize.

[21 : 26] That. As. Sinners. There is no hope. For us. Out with the mercy. Of God. And the provisions. Of that mercy. Have we come to pray. To God.

With a confession. Of our sins. With a real. Thankfulness. That God. Is merciful. With a real. Praise. To God.

That he is. This God. Who in his. Abundant mercy. Has brought us. A living hope. The mercy. Of God.

And then he. Speaks about. This. Being born. Again. According to his. Great mercy. He has caused. Us to be born. Again. Of course. There is a.

Very real sense. In which. Our. Rebirth. Spiritually. Has a connection. To. Our hope. It's through. Being born. Again. Through a new.

[22 : 21] Life. Coming. Into. Our. Experience. By the grace. And by the power. Of God. That we come. To know. What a. Genuine. Christian. Hope. Really is.

I think. What Peter. Is dealing with. Here. Is. Not so much. That instance. Of being. Born again. In that sense. But. The way. That he. Himself. Had come. And others. With him.

To. Be brought. Back again. As it were. To this. Great hope. That had. Reseded. So much. When they. Did not. Really. Understand. The resurrection.

Of Christ. And the need. For that. Resurrection. And you find it. Especially. In these chapters. Of John. We read. In John 20. Where Peter. Came. To discover. That Christ's body. Was no longer.

In the sepulcher. And then. In the following. Part of that chapter. And in the next chapter. Chapter 21. Where you come to. Jesus meeting with the disciples. On the shore. And coming especially.

[23 : 15] To single out Peter. For this. Interview. For this questioning. As to whether indeed. He loved him. And commissioning him. To go. And to. Feed his sheep. And to be a pastor.

Over his people. That's where you see. Peter coming. To this living hope. He didn't understand. After Jesus had gone. And been arrested. And given himself.

To be. Taken into custody. And then come to be crucified. And his death on the cross. And being buried. His body being put in the sepulcher. Peter did not. As the scripture. They say.

They did not. Understand the scripture. That he must rise again. From the dead. But when he did. And when they realized.

That he was indeed risen. From the dead. God he said. Through that. Brought us again. To life. As it were. To this living hope. This living hope.

[24 : 09] That we had then. Reignited if you like. Or inflamed all the more. Because. It's then that we understood. How the resurrection of Jesus.

Fitted into. Our hope. Of eternal life. And he says. God did this. Blessed be. The God and father.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who begat us. The word is really. Who has begotten us. It's translated here. Caused us to be born again.

But the word is. In the old translation is. Has begotten us. And in a sense. That's a better translation. Because. It deals with the whole issue. Of fathering something.

And this. Word. As used for God. The father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our father. In heaven. Well he's. What Peter is saying is. He has fathered. This hope for us.

- [25 : 05] He's brought this. Hope. This living hope. Into being for us. How has he brought it. Into being. By enabling us. To experience. The risen Jesus.
- For ourselves. By bringing us. Into contact. With the risen Christ. With the reality. Of his resurrection. From the dead. He has fathered in us.
- This hope. This living hope. And. That living hope. Is described. Precisely as such. Why does he call it.
- This living hope. Well. It's to. Distinguish it. From. Any other kind of hope. Hope. Is a really important word.
- In the epistle. In this letter. Of Peter. That's one of the key words. In fact. And that's important. When you realize. He's writing. To suffering Christians. He's writing.
- [26 : 00] To suffering Christians. And at the very beginning. Of the letter. He talks about this hope. But he talks about this hope. As a living hope. And he talks about this hope. In relation to the resurrection. Of Christ. And tracing it back.
- To God the Father. In other words. All of that. He says. Comes into the reckoning. When you ask. Why am I suffering. Why is there suffering. In the Christian life.
- Because it's related. To God and his wisdom. Because it's related. To the resurrection of Christ. Because it's related. To the Christian's hope. Of eternal life. It's a living hope.
- And he. Speaks about it. In other places. In the chapter as well. Verses. 13 and 21. And then in chapter 2. You find it there as well.
- In verse 15. Where he speaks there about. Our showing forth. If we're. Witnessing to God. This is the will of God.
- [26 : 58] That you should put to silence. The ignorance. Of foolish people. Live as people. Who are free. And then. He goes on to speak about. A hope. That is in you. And. Showing forth that hope.
- When you are. People ask you. A reason. Of the hope. That is in you. It's the hope. That is in you. The way you have. Something which connects.
- With eternity. In a positive way. In other words. This living hope. Is very different. From. Any other kind of hope. We use the word hope. Commonly.
- But. Usually it's. When you're saying. Well. People will say. For example. Not that I'm suggesting. You're doing it. But. People will say. If they do the lottery. Every week. I'm really hoping.
- That one of these weeks. That's going to be. My windfall. I'm really hoping. That I'll. End winning it. That that'll just do away.
- [27 : 53] With all my problems. Financially. Or whatever. That's a. Hope. Used in that context. There's no guarantee. If you use that sort of.
- Gambling language. The odds are against you. Anyway. From the beginning. But there's no. Guarantee. That what you're hoping for. In that sense. Will ever see the light of day.
- Now this Christian hope. This Christian hope. That Peter is talking about. It's not like that. It's not a hope. For something. That you wish. Might one or day. One day or not.
- Be true. But you can't be sure. This is a hope. That has a guarantee. That what you're hoping for. Will in fact. Undoubtedly. Come. To be realized.
- Because it's a hope. That lives. Upon something. That cannot be wrong. It lives upon. The promise of God. It lives upon. The word of God. It lives upon.
- [28 : 49] What's already happened. In the resurrection. Of Christ. And that doesn't. Bring people. Uncertainty. It's the opposite. That's why.

This Christian hope. Is a living hope. A hope. That's going to. Reach its peak. When what is hoped for.

Will be realized. In heaven. That's the guarantee. That God has given us. So you can see from that. How. This hope is linked.

To. The past. And the future. This hope is linked. To the past. Because it's linked. To the resurrection. Of Christ. That's what gives us hope. Where death.

Has been defeated. It's linked. To the future. Because. There's a resurrection. Awaiting the people. Of God. It's awaiting everybody. But it's awaiting. The people of God. In terms.

[29 : 45] Of realizing. Their hope. And when that resurrection. Takes place. As 1 Corinthians 15. Shows us. And. 1 Thessalonians 4.

And the other passages. Of the Bible. Well what happens. Then of course. Is that you come. To share. In this eternal life. Fully. With your savior. And you can see.

Not only that connection. With the past. And with the future. In terms of the hope. That Christians have. But you can see. Something now. Of how. Suffering. Fits in with that.

How suffering. Itself. Is actually brought. Into connection. With that hope. Because. God. Uses. Our sufferings.

In a way that. Strengthens our hope. That brings it more out. If you like. Into the open. That's why he talks here. In verse.

[30 : 42] Verses 4 to 6. Of this inheritance. You have this hope. Given to you. But it's a hope. Towards. An inheritance. That is imperishable.

And undefiled. In chapter 5. And verse 10. You find the same thing. As he rounds off. And closes the letter. After you have suffered. A little while.

The God of all grace. Who has called you. To his eternal glory. Will himself. Restore. Confirm. Strengthen. And establish you. To him. Be dominion. Forever and ever.

Amen. He ends with a praise. Again to God. Just as he's begun. And that's why. That suffering is important. 2nd Corinthians 4.

Paul's words. Verse 17. This. He says. This light affliction. Which is temporary. Is working for us.

[31 : 38] A far more exceeding. And eternal. Weight of glory. In other words. He's saying. Whatever the weight. Of your suffering. As a Christian is. It's always.

It's always. Outweighed. By the weight. Of the glory. That's waiting for you. But you see. What he's saying. The sufferings.

Themselves. Are working. For us. That weight. Of glory. That's to. To be our. Experience. Yes. And I hope.

That helps us. To understand. Something of. Why there is suffering. In the Christian life. And. The place of it. And the purpose of it. In the way that it relates.

To our hope. In the way that it relates. To the past. In Christ. And to the future. In our resurrection. Samuel Rutherford. One of the great.

[32 : 33] Scottish theologians. Who was often. Imprisoned. For his faith. Often. Abused. By those in authority. Because they couldn't stand.

His. Gospel. Preaching. And his gospel views. This is what he said. At one time. Of God's grace. God's grace.

Of course. Is his favor. As it works. In the life of his people. Grace. Tried. Is better. Than grace. And more. Than grace. It is glory.

In its infancy. Isn't that. So beautiful. And so appropriate. To what we've been thinking of today. In terms of the sufferings.

Of the Christian. That's grace. Tried. He's saying. Grace being tried. Along the way. Through life. And what he's saying is. Grace tried. Is better than grace. And it's more than grace.

[33 : 30] It is glory. In its infancy. It's the beginning. Of that eternity. That we will experience in Christ.

In his salvation. Let's pray. Lord our God. We pray again. For grace. That you would help us. To bear with whatever challenges.

And trials. And sufferings. We may have to go through. In this life. We thank you. For the abundance. Of teaching. In your word. In relation to that. That you have taken account.

Lord. How in every generation. Your people would experience. These sufferings. For you. And. Sufferings. In their own experience. In their progress.

Heavenwards. Blessed to us. We pray. These words. Today. From your word. And help us. As we apply them. To our own lives. That we may seek. To live for you. In whatever your providence.

[34 : 30] Brings to us. Here as we pray. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.