

START YOUR TIME TOGETHER

- If you were in an emergency situation and you had to leave everything behind and had enough time to take only 3 things with you, what would they be?
- What are some of the things that you highly value or are very important to you? (Most probably these are things that consume most of your time, your energy and your resources)

DIGGING DEEPER

Let's dig deeper into the text and find some applications at the same time:

- Last week we started the book of 1 Peter by learning about the author (Apostle Peter) and his original audience ("God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the Asia Minor provinces"). We also learned about the major themes of the book, most importantly and central to this book, the issue of suffering and how to understand and respond to it in a God-honoring way.
- **Read 1 Peter 1: 1-12.** In the portion we just read, Peter gives **6 reasons** why we can and should face and respond to suffering differently from a world that does not know Jesus Christ personally.

He writes that we can and should respond differently because **we have**:

1. **A living hope (V.3)**

What do you think "a living hope" means? What other kinds of hope is there?

2. A heavenly inheritance (V.4)

Explore the differences between the heavenly inheritance and the earthly inheritance.

- a. When do we receive an earthly inheritance? When do we receive the heavenly one?

- b. What about the difference in qualities? Think about the adjectives used for the heavenly inheritance? What do those adjectives mean? How are these qualities different from the earthly ones? (Matthew 6: 19-21)

- c. Many times earthly inheritance becomes a point of major conflict between family members. How does knowing these truths can help born again believers become witnesses for Christ amongst their unsaved family members in a time of sharing earthly inheritance?

3. A divine protection (V. 5)

Who is protecting and shielding this inheritance? Where is it kept?

4. A God-glorifying faith (vs. 6-7)

What are we to rejoice in?

Have you had an experience where you or somebody you knew went through a hard time and yet kept hi joy through it? Is the idea of being joyful in the midst of trials and suffering comes to you naturally? How about to the unbelieving world around us?

So many encouraging things in these 2 verses.

a. "For a little while". Our sufferings and trials are temporary.

When you hear the words **temporary** or **little while** what length of time comes to your mind?

All of us have gone through times of suffering or hardship. Some have been working under an unjust boss, some living with an abusive spouse, some dealing with a wayward child, some being inflicted by a sickness or disability and some feeling guilty and shame because of a failure. If you have or you are in a time of suffering, how long is considered from your point of view to be a "little while"? An hour, a day, a month, a year, 10 years.

Imagine you or someone you love was born disabled or became disabled as a result of an accident. Now consider the fact that this suffering for that person will last a lifetime. How does A little while" of verse 6 can bring comfort, strength and encouragement in such a circumstance.

b. "If necessary". Our sufferings are not arbitrary but necessary. Our God is not a cosmic bully who enjoys inflicting pain on people. Our God is a loving Father who allows hardship in people's lives for good and not evil. (Hebrews 12: 7 - 12)

c. Suffering has a twofold purposes: Suffering and the right response to it, can prove and purify our faith but more importantly it will result in praise, glory and honor.

- How can Suffering purify our faith?
- How can our response to our suffering bring praise and glory to God?
- We have heard the saying: if you talk the talk, walk the walk. Did Apostle Peter walk the walk? (Acts 5: 12 – 42 especially verses 40-41)

5. An unseen Savior (v. 8)

Do you have to see somebody in order to love him/her?

(Illustration: Can a blind person who has never seen anything love the people and things around him?)

Do you have to see something or someone in order to believe?

(Thomas encounter with Jesus in John 20: 24-29)

6. An end result: Salvation (v. 9)

On Sunday sermon, we heard that salvation is the most important thing in life.

- Is your salvation and new life in Christ the most important thing in your life?

- If it is can you honestly say that your lifestyle supports your beliefs and acknowledgment?
- When was the last time that you thanked God for this wonderful gift of salvation?
- In verses 10 to 12 Peter speaks about prophets and their prophecies in Old Testament concerning salvation and the role that the suffering of Messiah will play in it.

Isn't that interesting that this same Peter was the one who rebuked Jesus because He said that he will suffer. And now many years passed from that encounter he is writing to say that the Old Testament prophets already connected the suffering Messiah with the gift of salvation.

- What was the content, purpose of their message and method of seeking for it by the Old Testament prophets? (V. 10-11)
- Who is Peter referring to as "those who have preached the gospel to you"? (v. 12)
- Who aided the Old Testament prophets and the preachers of the gospel with their task?
- What important connection is Peter establishing between Old Testament prophets and New Testament preachers of the gospel?

- In what way these verses would have been an encouragement to the suffering believers?
- How would these last 3 verses be an encouragement to you?

LET'S SPEND SOME TIME IN PRAYER

As we go to a time of prayer lets keep this old Proverbial:

"Joy shared is doubled; Grief shared is halved".

Remember that one of the reasons we are in this life group is to walk with each other in times of ecstasy and agony. Please consider us worthy to walk with you especially in times of pain and suffering.