

I Don't Belong Here

1 Peter 1:1-12

1 Peter #1

Weekend of March 21-22, 2020



Introduction

We are going to take a break from our series in Romans. We will resume that after we walk through this difficult time for both our nation and our world. I thought 1 Peter is a book that would speak to us given our current circumstances.

This series walks through 1 Peter, a book written to Christians who were not only aware of the problem of evil but were living in the midst of pain, suffering, and constant trouble. Our prayer is that those who feel like outsiders in this world would

see how the gospel transforms even our most painful experiences. That's what I hope happens as we walk our way through this series. I pray you will find both hope and encouragement in this troubling season of life.

The author of this book is Peter. **People love Peter** because there is something about him we can identify with. **He was just a normal guy; he had a big mouth; he said some stupid things.**

And he was not real churchy, either, which sometimes I find refreshing. Paul is sometimes way up here; Peter is almost always down here. Paul was like, "I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees; I graduated from the highest school in the land;" Peter was like, "I know the difference between a carp and a crappy." Paul probably would have sat around and watched the history channel; Peter seems like more of a Sportscenter guy.

Peter writes this book to people who are in the midst of suffering. They don't understand why they're going through it, or what they should do about it. One thing I think is helpful to see: the Bible writers don't hide themselves from this question of suffering: they are fully aware of the problem that suffering presents to faith in a good God.

Sometimes it seems like we think we came up with the question of how suffering and pain could coexist with a good God: **back then everyone assumed that good people got rewarded and bad people got punished...** and now we're like, "Wait... innocent people seem to suffer. Children die of starvation. The wicked go unpunished and the good unrewarded." I living a good life and Covid-19 shows up. Peter addresses all of this. Let's dive in.

Bible Study

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia... 1 Peter 1:1

"Elect exiles:" that's a very important name. **"Elect" means that they are God's chosen people; "Exiles" meant they are not in home territory. Some translations say, "Aliens."**

These were both names that had been given to the Jews at one point: the Jews were God's elect people, and for a while they have had been driven out of Israel to live in a foreign land. "Elect exiles": God's blessed and favored people, but not in a place where God rules; under

subjugation to a foreign, enemy power. Peter now gives that name to the church: you are God's chosen people, but you are living in a land under the domination of an enemy power. **In other words, you don't really belong here. You're citizens of another country. Again, some translations say "aliens." Some say "strangers." You're odd. You don't fit. That's because they are tuned into something different.** Look at what he says 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... 1 Peter 1:3

Mercy: Peter begins their thinking with God's mercy. That's a good place to start... A lot of times the assumption we have in pain is why are all these bad things happening to us good people? The Bible takes the opposite approach. This world is under a curse. All of it.

Peter reminds them all God's goodness is mercy. **Religion says, "We are good, so God owes us." The gospel is, "We are evil but God has been merciful so we owe Him."**

In mercy we has caused to us to be born again to a living hope: Hope is what you look forward to on the other side of pain; it's what tells you everything is going to be OK; that it will all be worth it.

The quest for hope in pain is a universal human experience. Victor Frankl, was a Jewish-Austrian psychoanalyst that was imprisoned in Auschwitz. He noted how people responded to suffering in his book, Man's Search For Meaning. Some responded to feeling hopeless by becoming brutal and cruel themselves. Others responded to hopelessness by giving up.

Frankl said that the ones who truly overcame Auschwitz were those who had a fixed reference point beyond the world, something they held onto that was out of the grasp of death and destruction. Here is how he put it...

"Life in a concentration camp tears open a soul and exposes its depths and its foundations." Life with an active pandemic tears open our souls and exposes its depths and foundations.

That's essentially what Peter is saying: trials and pain expose where our hope is: For many of us, our hope is simply that our circumstances will change. When it looks like you won't ever get that, you despair. You give up. You become bitter. Ever seen a girl get hurt by a guy and say, "All men are pigs. All of them."

Peter says we have a living hope... Look at verse 4... **to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you... 1 Peter 1:4**

There is your fixed reference point: something glorious, wonderful, beyond the scope of this world. An inheritance and a hope that death and disease cannot touch. Something that is so glorious it makes all the pain worth it. Peter says: "and I see this inheritance through the resurrection of Jesus."

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Peter's darkest hour had been when Jesus died. That's when everything fell apart. He had based his whole life on the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. But now Jesus has died. That Friday and Saturday was a time of despair. Peter is so disappointed that he denies even knowing Jesus.

But then Sunday, he goes to the tomb and it is empty. And then Jesus appears to him and His sadness turns to joy; his despair is turned into triumph, and he realizes that the whole time, God had a plan. Yeah, Friday and Saturday were painful, but there was a Sunday coming that reversed all of the pain of Friday and Saturday.

Peter sees that we all, right now, are living in a kind of Saturday. We are exiles. But that time is brief and the joy of resurrection Sunday is coming. JRR Tolkien described the resurrection as a time when "every sad thing becomes untrue."

There is a great Sunday morning in eternity where all sad things come untrue; you are reunited with a lost child; disease is taken away; there is no more Covid-19 and all of the anxiety all of that brings...there is no more pain and crying and God wipes away every tear.

Here's another thing Peter saw in the resurrection: on that worst day, where it looked like God was the least in control, God was most in control.

The greatest day in human history was the day of the crucifixion. But to them it looked like the worst. It wasn't just that God won in the end, it was that God used the apparent defeats as a part of His plan.

What if you saw your life through the lens of the cross and the resurrection? That there was a glorious Sunday morning coming when all sad things would come untrue? An inheritance death and disease could never touch. And then you see how even the most painful parts of your life were working toward that end?

What does that give you? Say it: **Hope**. Look at verse 6...

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials..." 1 Peter 1:6

Here's something interesting about those two verbs: Rejoice & grieved: First, they are both very intense verbs. "**Rejoice**" means intense rejoicing and "**Grieved**" is the Greek word used to describe Jesus as he went to the cross. Crushed. Second, they are both present tense verbs.

Walking with Jesus is often simultaneously great joy and deep pain. Christians hurt. But see, their hurt can only go so deep, because their ultimate hope is in a God who brings life back from the dead; turns tragedy into triumph and takes us through the cross to bring us to the resurrection. Look at how he continues in verse 7...

“...so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:7

Here you see part of God’s purpose: God allows trials to purify faith in you. Peter says it is like gold: tested by fire... **Trials reveal those places where you don’t really trust God.** Some of you don’t: as soon as things start going wrong, you start thinking, “Oh, God, you’ve forgotten me.”

Trials reveal where you love God’s gifts more than you love God: I know of a guy who grew up in one of those prosperity churches... he was into God. Then, he was disappointed; things went wrong for him. Quit believing altogether. Now, looking for reasons to discredit Christian faith.

Trials show you both those things and purify your faith. Look at what comes next...

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9

So here’s the question: **Can you believe in a God that is doing that right now in your life?** That in the pain and in the disappointment you are going through... that **He is purifying you for Himself** and preparing you for an inheritance is that is beyond your comprehension? **And do you sense the glory of that God and feel the weight of His love** so much that it fills you now, even in the midst of the deepest and darkest pain, with an inexpressible joy, because it is so valuable to you? The resurrection of Christ meant that much to Peter.

Can I point out something to you? Peter bases everything in his life on the fact that Jesus actually rose from the dead. Peter went from being a guy who despaired of life; a guy who denied Jesus at the first sign of danger (remember, after Jesus was betrayed Peter denied Jesus 3 times in the space of about an hour; the reason he did that was because he thought Jesus had failed); he went from that to one who would face the gravest trials with joy; crucified upside down. Look at how he concludes this passage...

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. 1 Peter 1:10-12

Here’s the second reason we believe: **the glory of the gospel.**

Here I am looking at a God who apparently loved me so much that not even death could stand in His way; He took the penalty of my sin into Himself so He could rescue me. When I look at the cross my mouth is stopped because I know that’s what I deserve. The world is under a curse because of sin. The whole race, all of us, has rebelled against God.

Application

What if you based your understanding of God's love on the cross? You say, 'But what about my situation?' Why are we enduring this season with Covid-19? What if God's wisdom was so great that you couldn't understand it... and you may not see how the cross on Friday produces the resurrection on Sunday?

You say, 'But what about the starving children?' What if God's holiness really was so incredibly beyond what you've imagined, that this world really was under the curse... but that God really was making all things new and would take care of the innocent ones in eternity in a way beyond what you could imagine?

Faith grows at one place: the cross. Throughout my life I've demanded explanation; what God gave me was revelation.

So, like Paul and John and every other Bible writer, Peter leaves you gazing at the cross. He tells you stare deeply. There are mysteries there that not even angels understand yet.

Author Tim Keller wrote an introduction to a book that is called, Gospel. His introduction explains this passage in a very profound way...

One of the most startling passages in the Bible connects the magnificence of angels with the mystery of the gospel. Angels are incredibly majestic and powerful beings, living in God's eternal presence. Yet there is something that has happened on earth which is so stupendous that even these immortal beings experience the persistent longing "to look into these things" (1 Peter 1:12). What are "these things" that could possibly and consistently consume the attention of God-fixated creatures? The answer is—the gospel.

The angels never get tired of looking into the gospel. This means that there is no end to gospel exploration. There are depths in the gospel that are always there to be discovered and applied not only to our ministry and daily Christian life, but above all to the worship of the God of the gospel with renewed vision and humility.

The underlying conviction in my preaching, pastoring, and writing is that the gospel—this eternally fascinating message craved by the angels—can change a heart, a community, and the world when it is recovered and applied.

In a world that is full of uncertainty and great anxiety in these troubling days, it is the gospel that calms our heart and gives us a hope and a peace that passes all understanding.

My faith has found a resting place; not in device or creed; I trust the ever living one; His wounds for me shall plead.