1 PETER

1 Peter 5:1-14 Responsibilities in Suffering

Do not be surprised: what to do when the fiery trial comes

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, October 25, 2020
PASSAGES	1 Peter 4:12-5:14; Hebrews 12:4-12; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15; Psalm 37:20; 1 Corinthians 12:12-21; John 21:15-17; Matthew 20:16; Revelation 2:10; Job 1:12; Isaiah 40:8
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:58:23 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Peter tells suffering Christians not to be surprised by fiery trials. If we anticipate them now, we can keep doing what we were trained to do when they hit: rejoice to share in Christ's sufferings, entrust ourselves to a faithful Creator, live under the leaders he gives, humble ourselves, cast our anxieties on him and resist the devil. We do sheep stuff; the Chief Shepherd does Chief Shepherd stuff.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You are not surprised by what you anticipate. Count the cost now, so that when a fiery trial comes you are not consumed by it.
- Suffering does not mean God is against you and needs appeasing. He is a good shepherd who is for you, even when he lets trials come.
- Church is not a sermon download to a floating head plus music. We are living stones and a body, and Christ gives the church leaders on purpose.
- Peter, of all people, calls himself a "fellow elder." Elders shepherd God's flock willingly, eagerly and by example, not domineering, under the Chief Shepherd.

- Humility is not self-hatred, which can be self-obsession. It is caring about what Christ cares about and serving without being noticed.
- The devil sometimes comes as a roaring lion, not a trickster. Even the lowliest Christian, in Christ, can resist him.
- After you have suffered a little while, God himself will restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. Building the church is his job.

▶ 0:58:23

The room was fuller than usual, and Matt was glad: "I'll know when my jokes are bad, which is usual." It was the third and last week in 1 Peter, a letter short enough to read aloud in one sitting, which he recommended.

▶ 1:00:03

The first week was about hope in Christ rather than in improving circumstances; the second, about our purpose in suffering. This week: our responsibilities as a body in and through suffering – whether that means harassment, being left out, or a little slander – and a lesson for the future.

1. Do not be surprised

▶ 1:01:13

> "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."
>
> 1 PETER 4:12–13 ↗

▶ 1:01:53

How are you not surprised by something? By anticipating it. Then, admitting he has never taken a preaching class "and I know it shows," he told a rare personal story.

▶ 1:02:24

For a year and a half he had been training at a Krav Maga self-defense gym, and he finally tried their Sunday "fight church" – three-minute kickboxing rounds with whoever you like. "This is not a glory story." His first fifteen rounds were awful. Despite all the training, as soon as he got hit in the face, all he could think was, *they're hitting me in the face*. The last time went better – "which just means I was evenly matched sometimes" – and the difference was not more training. Before each round he told

himself: I'm going to get hit in the face, and I'm okay with that. Just don't back up. Cover up too much and you cannot see what they are doing.

▶ 1:05:16

A fiery trial will feel like being hit hard in the face, and that may be all you can focus on. "It's not that you weren't trained. It's just that instead of focusing on what you were trained to do, all you're thinking about is this awful thing happening to you – which, by the way, is normal." So come to peace with it now, as part of counting the cost.

▶ 1:06:18

And what have Christians been trained to do? Go to the Lord with our problems, cast our anxiety on him, glory in his presence, proclaim his excellencies, entrust ourselves to him as a faithful Creator. The instinct under harassment is to cope – skip church, play it cool, get rid of the difficult person. Instead, follow Christ, rejoicing that there is a bigger story than your life.

▶ 1:07:18

When it hurts, our scope narrows: what did I do to offend the Lord? "It's sort of a real natural pagan idolatry thing. I forgot to feed the gods this week, so God's mad at me." Flip that around. "God is for you. He's a good shepherd. He will let trial come, but instead of being against you... that's not Christianity. He's for you all the time."

2. Suffering as a Christian

▶ 1:07:50

"If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler" (1 Peter 4:14–16). As Evan had said in the announcements, things were getting testy out there. Being viciously partisan and rude and then suffering for it is not what Peter means. He means being cursed, slandered or harmed for association with Jesus, or for refusing to join others' flood of debauchery.

▶ 1:09:02

"It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17–19). "Judgment is something God does, not the devil." Again and again Peter points out that suffering is permitted by the God who is always for you. God disciplines us as a Father; if he never did, he would be treating us as illegitimate children (Hebrews 12:4–12). So "let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good" – a faithful Creator, "not a capricious god you have to buy off." Our works will be tested by fire (1 Corinthians 3:13–15); the Lord's enemies vanish like smoke (Psalm 37:20). "You'll never be in eternity looking back, embarrassed that you gloried in God when it was hard."

3. Not a floating head

▶ 1:12:04

That is a segue to leadership, which is important when times are easy and paramount when they are hard: elders exercising authority in the flock to nourish, protect and comfort. The coronavirus separation had everyone asking what it means to do church. Matt teased a caricature mercilessly: Christianity as "a download to your floating head, and then music for God's enjoyment" – stream your favorite preacher, play your favorite worship band, "oh, that's church, I did it."

▶ 1:13:18

But we are living stones being built into a temple, not stones hurled into a field and preached at from a distance. We are a body with different parts, and a body does not have "a floating appendage out here unattached… Hello, my name is Matthew, would you please greet my floating orb?" (1 Corinthians 12). And Christ gives the church apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, overseers. "Why would Christ give stuff he doesn't think we need, like a weird white elephant party? Here's an overseer. What do I do with that?" – "I did only have one cup of coffee, but it was strong."

4. Fellow elders under the Chief Shepherd

▶ 1:14:23

> "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."
>
> 1 PETER 5:1–4 ↗

▶ 1:15:06

This is Peter – the preeminent disciple, always named first – calling himself a fellow elder, because the flock belongs to God and every elder answers to the Chief Shepherd. "Don't think for a second that if we don't have enough smart pastors or charismatic evangelists, the whole body of Christ operation is going to fall apart in the next ten years. The body of Christ has always existed in spite of our best efforts." Jesus said he would build his church.

▶ 1:16:57

Why tell elders not to domineer unless they had real authority? Peter, likely knowing he would suffer greatly, did not go around saying "I'm Peter, I'm kind of a big deal." He set an example and did what he called others to do. Willingly, and not for money, "otherwise you're just a hired hand." Matt recalled Jesus reinstating Peter on the beach: "Do you love me? Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). The focus was on Christ. For a culture shock, he recommended Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule* – "wow, that's different than American Christianity."

▶ 1:19:43

None of this makes sense, he added, if you divorce it from God's kingdom and real presence. If this life is all there is, self-preservation is the rational response to suffering. Peter's call to serve, suffer and hope makes sense only because of the glory of Christ.

5. Clothed with humility

▶ 1:20:54

> "Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."
>
> 1 PETER 5:5–7 ↗

▶ 1:21:38

Being subject to elders hurts the ego. "You got to reckon with that. That's Scripture." Matt suspected that the American church's boiling down of Christianity to sermons and songs is partly a way to avoid being accountable to anybody. "You could say, well, I'm subject to Jesus. Okay, but he gave you leaders." Clothing yourself with humility is easy alone in a field. "Walking in humility with actual live human beings around you – it's a complete game changer."

▶ 1:23:48

And notice the contrast: the very God we bring our petitions to opposes the proud. "Which side of that do you want to be on?" Humility is not self-hatred, which "could also be a manifestation of self-obsession." It looks like caring about what Christ cares about, caring for others because he does, serving even if you are never recognized or get teased for it.

▶ 1:25:07

There will be a great reversal – the last first and the first last (Matthew 20:16) – and the big-shot preachers may get a polite nod while God tells the whole story of some "Aunt Sue" who served in

glorious anonymity. “And Aunt Sue’s like, no, stop, I didn’t do it for the recognition. And God’s like, let me silence you. I’m going to keep telling the story.” It will be like the end of a movie, “but more epic” – a wedding feast.

6. The roaring lion

▶ 1:26:41

> “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”
>
> 1 PETER 5:8–9 ↗

▶ 1:27:31

Back to the punch in the face: instead of being consumed by the pain, remember your training. The devil is sometimes described as an angel of light, making the wrong thing look right. Here there is no disguise – just a lion roaring in your face to terrify you. Even then, stand firm. Not “I can take him”: “the lowliest of Christians, in God’s grace, under the protection of Christ, can resist the devil.” And you are not alone: believers worldwide are suffering the same things, and Christ is with you.

▶ 1:29:40

Why does God let Satan roam? Jesus told the church in Smyrna, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer… the devil will put some of you in prison to test you… Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown” (Revelation 2:10). “The devil is God’s devil, after all.” In Job, Satan needs “a hall pass” (Job 1:12). Peter says it again and again: if necessary you suffer; to this you were called; better to suffer for doing good, if God wills; suffering according to God’s will. Much of it forms Christ in us – “which must be really aggravating to the devil, to assist in a sanctifying process for many believers.”

7. The Chief Shepherd does Chief Shepherd stuff

▶ 1:32:21

> "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."
>
> 1 PETER 5:10–11 ↗

▶ 1:33:02

A little while, "even if it's eighty years long." The grass withers, but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8). And he *himself* restores and establishes us – not because we proved we were good enough, "we ate the fruit of the Spirit, we avoided the vegetables of unholiness." "He's not getting tired of his job – ah, I'm sick of these sheep everywhere. We're getting jaded. He's not."

▶ 1:34:09

"So that's one worry you don't have to carry to your grave: can I strengthen the church enough? It's not even your job, dude. At best you're a fellow elder, serving at his pleasure." Your part is your calling in the suffering: proclaim his excellencies, cast your anxieties on him, rejoice to share his sufferings, entrust yourself to a faithful Creator, wait for his return. "You do sheep stuff. He does Chief Shepherd stuff."

▶ 1:35:21

Matt read the closing greetings – "greet one another with the kiss of love," lately air hugs and high fives – and Peter's own summary: "this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it" (1 Peter 5:12–14). So, as a sheep: do not be surprised; rejoice to bear the name Christian; entrust yourself to the faithful Creator; clothe yourself with humility; cast your anxieties on him; resist the devil and the passions that war against your soul; and stand firm in the grace of God. He prayed for the worldwide church, entrusted to God the task of building it, and asked for grace to obey.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- 1 Peter 4:12–13
- 1 Peter 4:14–16
- 1 Peter 4:17–19
- Hebrews 12:4–12
- 1 Corinthians 3:13–15
- Psalm 37:20
- 1 Corinthians 12:12–21
- 1 Peter 5:1–4
- John 21:15–17
- 1 Peter 5:5–7
- Matthew 20:16
- 1 Peter 5:8–9
- Revelation 2:10 (NIV)
- Job 1:12
- 1 Peter 5:10–11
- Isaiah 40:8
- 1 Peter 5:12–14

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. What would it look like for you to “come to peace now” with the possibility of a fiery trial, the way Matt prepared to get hit in the face?
2. When suffering comes, how do you catch yourself thinking you need to appease an angry God, and how does “he’s for you all the time” answer that?
3. Where have you been tempted to treat church as a sermon download and a playlist, and what would being a connected part of the body look like for you?
4. How do you tell the difference between humility and self-hatred in your own life?
5. Which anxiety will you deliberately cast on the Chief Shepherd this week, trusting him to do what is his job and not yours?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel’s senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church’s governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope’s own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMb921mPQ2I&t=3503s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.