

## No Easy Answers

1 Peter 3:8-12

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 15, 2017

If you would go ahead and turn in your Bibles with me to the book of 1 Peter. I saw we had a lot of children in here today, is there enough room downstairs? I volunteered the back of Richard's truck, if there's not. Just kidding, just kidding. Turn with me in your Bibles please, to the book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that this morning, we're in a series we started back in April called "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. And we started it around Easter time; it's been going on for a couple months now. The plan is to take this through the end of the year, and then we'll move on to some other things, because it takes a while to deal with the problem of suffering, doesn't it? It's not something you can do quickly. I don't want to belabour the point, but you can't rush something like this.

Several years ago, Al Mohler was visiting with a group of professors, who asked him, "What's wrong with the young people today?" He said, "They're a little too interested in books and they're a little too interested in doctrine." To which Al Mohler replied, "I think they're tired of getting their theology from a bumper sticker." He said, "I think they're tired of getting it from the back of a Hallmark card. They want real answers. They want real help." And friends, we want to be that way in our suffering. We want real answers. You don't want something that can go on the back of a card. And it takes time to get that.

I talked with several of you recently. You've told me that you're in a tough time right now; you're going through a lot. You got problems at work, problems at home, and you want answers. And as your pastor, I wish I could tell you, "Take three pills and call me in the morning." Wouldn't that be great? "Do this, this, and this, check this off, take this thing, do that, and then it's all over." But that's not the way these things work. Sometimes there's no quick fixes to life. Sometimes there's no pills to take. And to say it theologically, sometimes there's no easy answers, because we don't know what God's up to; we don't know what He has planned with our lives.

Isaiah says, "His ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts than our thoughts." Paul says, "Who has known the mind of God?" Which means that on this side of heaven, there's always going to be questions. On this side of eternity, there's always going to be mysteries. In the 1920s, missionaries David and Svea Flood went to the Belgian Congo to spread the Gospel there, when Malaria struck, killing Svea and leaving David stranded with an infant daughter to care for. She gave birth, and then died, and David was left with the child. He decided to put her up for adoption and go back to Sweden, where unfortunately, he began to live a very bitter and disillusioned life. Until one day, 30 years later, he got a knock on the door and it was his daughter. Apparently, she had become a Christian. She had been adopted by Christians and she came across a missionary magazine... She was in the States, in America... With a picture of her mother's grave back in the Congo. And beneath the picture, it told the story of what happened after she died. It said that Svea Flood had led a little boy to Jesus right before dying. And the little boy grew up, and built a school in his village, and he used the school to lead his fellow students to Christ. Those students went home and led their parents to Christ. Those parents went back to the village and led the tribal chieftain to Christ. And eventually, the little boy became so

successful at leading others to Jesus, that he became superintendent of the largest church in the Congo. By the time of his death, it had 100,000 Christians in it. But David Svea, back in Sweden, didn't know any of that. He had no idea. And the point is, that God doesn't always let us know what He's up to in our suffering. He doesn't always give us the answers. Sometimes the Lord keeps His mysteries.

Charles Spurgeon said, "He who demands a reason from God is not fit to receive one." He goes on to say, he says, "Providence is wonderfully intricate." He says, "Ah, you want to see through Providence, do you? You never will. I assure you. You have not eyes strong enough, so you must believe." You want to see what God is up to in your afflictions, but that has not been given to you, so you have to trust Him. You have to have faith that He is working for your good. Have you guys ever heard the phrase, "Your arms are too short to box with God?" Has anybody ever heard that before? Yeah, a couple. Your arms are too short to fight heaven. Our minds are too small to comprehend it, so you have to believe; you have to take it on faith.

In his book on suffering, Randy Alcorn tells a story of a girl who got sick on prom day, and she wanted to know why, and he goes on to explain what the conversation would look like if God answered her. And he says,

Suppose you're a sick teenage girl, and you're sick on prom day, and God could whisper, "I let you get pneumonia, so you wouldn't bond with that young man who wouldn't be right for you, and so your parents would go get you your favourite dessert where they would see a help wanted poster and tell you, so you can apply, and get the job, and meet the girl who will become your best friend, who will help you 20 years from now, when your husband gets cancer." "My husband? What's he like? And why would he get cancer?" "Well, in order to make you more Christ-like and to help you become a servant." "But I don't want to be a servant. I just want a husband who doesn't have cancer." "And to teach you to depend on Me, and draw your children and grandchildren closer to Me." "I'll have grandchildren too?"

You see where this is going? And this is just one little event. How could God explain His purposes for everything to us? He can't; we couldn't understand it, and therefore, He keeps His mysteries. Now, having said that, before we get into our text, I just want to tell you there is good news, because God does give us some answers. It's not a complete mystery what goes on in the universe. Here's couple things that He tells us in our suffering: He tells us that He's not gonna give us more than we're able to bear, amen? He's not gonna give you more than you can handle. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation [He] will provide the way of escape also, so you can stand up under it." And have you guys ever seen those stickers that say, on a cardboard box that says, "200-pound weight limit," right? Or, "100 pounds and no more?" God puts those stickers on Christians and He says, "This much suffering and no more." The Scripture's clear about that: "This much pain and no further."

And God also carries you through your trials. That's another answer we see in Scripture. He doesn't leave you to struggle by yourself. Psalm 55, in verse 22 says, "Cast your burden on the

Lord and He will sustain you. He'll never allow the righteous to be shaken." The word "never," there is a wonderful word. It means never. There will never be a time when God will allow you to be shaken. There will never be a time when He will leave you alone. You could live for 1,000 years, if you're a believer in Christ, the Lord will be with you every step of the way. And you can make a million trips to the hospital, and the Lord will be with you in every single one of them. That's a promise in Scripture. That's a guarantee.

And that leads to one more answer we have in our suffering that we could talk about this morning, and that is that God uses our suffering to produce fruit in our lives. There's certain virtues like humility and patience that can only be learned through suffering. There's certain fruits like long suffering that can only be learned by suffering a long time. You guys understand. You can't flip a switch in your brain, and tomorrow you're patient. Does that make sense? It doesn't work that way. It's got to happen over time. I used to have a tennis coach that prayed... I think this is 'cause he worked with me, but he said, "Lord, please give me patience and give it to me now." It doesn't work that way, see? I was talking to someone the other day, who said, "How do I witness to my family member? She's lost. She doesn't know the Lord. I love her. I don't want her to go to hell. How do I tell her about Christ?" And I said, "With great patience." You do it over the long haul. You don't do it all at once, and then you're done with it. You might be able to do that, but chances are, she's probably gonna get upset, or she's not gonna understand, or whatever the case may be. And then you have to go back, and you go back, and you go back. And when you do that, The Lord is teaching you the lesson of patience. He's teaching you how to persevere. A lot of you have children in this room. You don't tell your children a lesson and they get it overnight, right? You got to do it again, and again, and again. And the Lord puts those children in your life to bear good fruit in you.

And that leads us to the 1 Peter. 1 Peter was written to people who were bearing good fruit in their suffering. At least, Peter wanted to see that in their lives. He wanted to see them be patient and long suffering with their loved ones, and their friends, and their co-workers. I've already read the passage to you, so I won't read it here. But just to summarize some of what we read, if you look in chapter 2, verse 13, Peter says these people were suffering in certain areas of life, like the government. In verse 13, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors," that's a reference to the government. "Suffer well with the government," he says. In verse 18, he goes into the workplace: "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect," that's another way of referring to your job. In chapter 3 verse 1 he mentions, "Wives, suffering well with their husbands." In chapter 3 verse 7, "Husbands, suffer well with your wives."

And to give you a little background on this, we've talked about this in other weeks, but we read this, and we think, "Boy, my life is hard in these areas." Listen, you've got nothing compared to these people. The government had total control over citizens in the first century. They could make them do anything. The same goes for slaves and masters; the same goes for husbands and wives. And so, if these people could do this, Peter's actually kind of reaching through the ages, and saying, "If they can honour God in these areas, you can do this today too. You can please Him in your life now and in your suffering as well." As a matter of fact, in chapter 2 verse 21 he gives a little parenthesis in all this. And he says, "For you had been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." Peter says,

"If Christ did this, then you can do it too. If He honoured the Lord in His suffering, then so can you."

And that leads us to our passage for this morning. As a matter of fact, before I get to that, this reminds me of another story. The story is told of an African man named Joseph, who heard about Christ, and he got saved, and he went back to his village to tell the people about it. And as he did, they beat him with barbed wire, and left him to die in the bush, so he went back again, and told them again, and they did it again. And then he went back a third time, and this last time, before he passed out from the beating, the people repented and trusted in Christ for salvation. That's kind of what's going on with these people here. They're suffering, so Peter tells them to go back again and again and again. They're having a tough time with the authorities. They're having a tough time on the job. They're having a tough time at home being Christians.

By the way, even more background to this: Peter died, church history says, sometime in the AD '60s, which means he outlived Jesus by 30 years or so. Jesus died around AD 30, AD 33, which means that this church or these churches in this book could not have been more than 30 years old, probably younger than that, which means all this is brand new. Their faith in Christ is brand new, their interactions with their family is brand new. Their interactions with their boss, and their governors and kings are brand new, which means it's causing problems. And Peter says, "With those problems, you need to handle your suffering in a Christ-honouring way. You need to go back to them again and again and again with the Gospel. Let your light shine through this." David Powlison says that, "God is like the blazing sun and we're all like light bulbs, but if you put us against the darkness, we all shine. And if you put us in a world of pain and suffering, we will stand out. We will be different."

And that brings us to our passage for this morning. If you're taking notes, in 1 Peter 3:8-12, Peter says that "God wants you to stand out in two different areas when you suffer." He goes back and summarizes all that he's talked about here so far, and that's what we're gonna do this morning, by saying there's two areas where you need to stand out when you're suffering, where you need to be different. And the first is in how you act towards suffering. That's the gist of what he's saying in this whole passage. It's very general here, but God wants you to stand out in the way you act towards suffering.

Christians stand out by their actions, don't they? It's what we do; we stand out by how we behave. Jesus said, "You'll know them by their fruits." He says, "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit." It's as simple as that. It's not that complicated. John said, "We know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." It's the same idea: Keep the commandments, it's a good indication that you're saved; don't, it's an indication that you're not. James said, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead." And in a similar way Peter is saying here, "Your faith is dead, if you don't stand out when you suffer. Your faith is dead, if you act like the lost world around you, if you kick, and scream, and holler, and cuss, and all that." To say it another way, your family should perk up when you become a Christian; they should take notice. It's not a bad thing, it's a good thing. There should be some kind of commotion going on. You just need to handle it in a God-honouring way.

And that's what Peter goes on to say in verse 8, as these people became Christians, as this is all very new to them in all these areas where they're interacting... He says in verse 8, he says, "To sum up, all of you..." And that means everybody: Slaves and masters, Christians and the government, husbands, wives... "All of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in spirit." That phrase, "to sum up" doesn't mean to sum up the letter. He's got more to write in this letter. It means to sum up all he said about the government, and workplace, and marriage, to sum up masters and slaves, and husbands and wives. And then he goes on, if you notice in the text, to give them five verbs or five actions to take. He just knocks them off there one by one.

Now, before we get into those, I want to point out to you (this is kind of interesting) three of these verbs are mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. This is the only time you see them. And two of them are very rare, meaning that they only occur a few times in the Bible, which means that Peter had a very big vocabulary. I don't think people give enough credit to fishermen, right Alec? Fishermen are brilliant... This is a brilliant guy here. As a matter of fact, Peter, he's so creative in this letter, in his Greek writing, that some liberal scholars have said there's no way that a man of Peter's education could have written this book. And they say he didn't write it. But if you think about it, Peter ran his own fishing business. He made enough money to buy a house and have a wife, which was kind of hard to do back then. He was the chief spokesman for the Apostles, and he was the first preacher the church ever had in Acts chapter 2, so Peter did write this. He was a brilliant man, a man of a great scope of mind.

And he gives us five actions to take when we're suffering, all creatively written here, and the first one is to be harmonious. And that word is *homophrón* in Greek. It comes from the word *homos*, which means one and the word *phronos*, which means mind. Have one mind together. He says, "Don't be divisive and don't be provoking all the time." Some people suffer today, not because they're a Christian, but because they're a jerk. Amen? They're not suffering, because they're being godly. They're suffering, 'cause they're rude and insulting everybody. You see this a lot, unfortunately, on talk radio, sometimes on stuff on the Internet. No one asked them their opinion, and they're giving it. They interrupt people when they're talking. They get louder and louder as the conversation goes on, as if volume and content go together. Peter says, "Don't do that when you suffer." He says, "Don't lose your manners as a Christian." When your husband attacks you, don't attack him back. When your wife slanders you and puts you down, don't respond in kind. Promote harmony. Promote peace. It's said that one sign of a healthy church is unity, the people united. And I think it's the same way with an individual Christian. One sign of a healthy Christian is that he's a peaceful person. He's not out to fight all the time. He's not boxing God all the time and he's not boxing other people.

And it leads to the next word here: Peter goes on and he says... He mentions the word "sympathetic." That's another compound word in Greek that means "with feeling or with emotion." He says, "Consider other people's feelings." Don't be so caught up in your own pain, that you can't see the pain of others. Don't be so caught up in your own hurt and anguish that you can't see that other people are in the midst of it too. I had a professor in seminary who said, "If you can't weep over Jerusalem, you have no business preaching there." That's what Peter is saying here. If you can't weep over Chilliwack, you have no business preaching here. If you can't weep over the government, or if you can't weep over the people at work, or if you can't weep

over what's going on in your home, if there's suffering going on there, then you have no business preaching there. It is said that you should never talk about hell with a smile on your face. And when you tell people they're going to hell, you should have a tear in your eye. That's the idea here.

He goes on to give you another word as well. He mentions the word "brotherly." "To sum up, "All of you be harmonious, sympathetic, and brotherly." "Show brotherly love" is the idea. "Show brotherly kindness," which is the next word here.

"Be kind-hearted. Let your love and kindness flow out of your heart." An elderly woman used to buy stamps at a certain post office every day, even though it was a long way from her home, and when she was asked, "Why do you go way over there for stamps?" She said, "Because the other post office doesn't ask me about my arthritis." See, they're kind. They're considerate. You want to be that way when you suffer. Nothing makes you stand out like kind people when they suffer. I've been in people's hospital rooms before, believers, who, I walk in... I walked into one lady's room one time, and she had had brain surgery, and she had things in her head, connected. She was suffering greatly, and she spent the whole time asking me how my day was, and I walked out of there thinking I was treading on the clouds of heaven. This is what Peter says. This is how you stand out in your suffering. You show kindness.

It leads to one more verb, that just ties this all together: "Be humble in spirit," he says. "Be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in spirit. Be humble in your own eyes, low in your own eyes, do all of this out of a lowly heart." There's no self-righteousness in this. There's nothing smug and haughty about it. I've been taking the men on Wednesday nights through "Nine Marks of a Healthy Church," and this past week, we came to Mark Eight, which is on spiritual growth. And several of the men, I think we all said we needed to grow in areas like this. Amen, men? We need to grow in our humility and kindness towards others. We need to grow in our brotherly love and sympathy.

Several of the men mentioned a word that came to mind as you read this list, the word "gentleness." When life gets busy and things get hard, men have a tendency to get hard themselves. We lose our gentleness. I've got two little kids, and I'll tell you, gentleness does not come natural to the human nature. My son can almost choke me to death on my finger when he grabs it. He doesn't know how to be soft with his hands. And some of us become the same way when we suffer. We just take life by the throat and squeeze it. We go home and kick the dog after a long day at work, or we go into the house and scold everybody, scold the kids, scold our wives. We're miserable to be around. Peter says, "You need to be gentle."

Tying into this theory of suffering, suffering can really harden you. It can make you want to take it out on other people. They say that the same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. And for some, the same suffering that melts their hearts for the Lord hardens others. It makes them bitter. You guys know what I'm talking about. Someone swindles you in a business deal, what do you want to do? You want to swindle them back, amen? That's what you want to do. You want to make them pay. Someone hurts your family, the same thing. You want to hurt them back. You want them to go through what you went through. Peter says, "Don't be that way." Christians don't

stand out that way. The lost world does that. The lost world can be hard towards one another. It takes Christians to act this way; we stand out by melting.

Some of you heard the name Eric Liddell? He was the star of the show "Chariots of Fire". He was the Olympic runner who refused to run on a Sunday, and so they put him in another race, and he won that one, and shocked the world. He set a world record. But what you may not know about Eric Liddell is that after the Olympics, he moved to China to become a missionary, and he died in an internment camp from a brain tumour that could have easily been operated on if he was free. It was very painful for him there was no medicine or any kind of anything to deaden the pain. But his fellow missionaries said, through all of that, he never became hard. He never became bitter or angry at the Chinese people. In fact, they said that after he died, the other missionaries in the cabin they were staying in noticed that the fireplace kept running out of wood. And they realized that while he was dying of a brain tumour, Eric Liddell got out of bed everyday at 5:00 AM to restock the fireplace and keep them warm. You want to suffer like that. You want to stand out that way with your kindness, with your sympathy and love towards others.

If you take one of these actions here and break it down a little bit, the first one on the list, be harmonious. Suffering should make you in harmony with others. It should give you a like-mindedness with people and the body of Christ, because we're all going through this together.

Many of you suffered to get this church started and it made you like-minded with each other; it brought harmony to this church. I'm so grateful that a lot of you didn't come in here and say, "Boy, I got to fix this, this, this, and this. I got a list." Or you didn't come in and say, "Pastor Jeremy, you can't tell that joke, that joke, or that joke, and stop wearing blue coats. And you got to grow taller, 'cause I can't see you behind the pulpit." You didn't act that way; you came in with a gentle approach. You came in promoting peace and harmony. Suffering does that to believers; it softens us up. One author said, "Suffering is a bitter root, but it brings forth the sweetest fruit. It goes down bad, but it comes up good. It softens us for Christ."

And that leads to another way to stand out in your suffering, and that is by reacting toward it. Again, these are very general things he mentions here. He's just summarizing all that he said before, but you stand out in suffering by acting the right way, and by reacting the right way, by responding well to the behaviour of others. A lot of suffering is reactionary. You don't want it to happen; you're not out there looking for it. Someone does you bad in a business deal and you respond to that, you didn't want it. Someone hurts your family and the same thing, it's a responsive thing. "And when it comes," Peter says, "There's a couple of things you need to do, a couple of reactions to take."

The first one is, you need to forgive. He goes on to talk about forgiveness. He says in verse 8, "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult." That last phrase there, "Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult," it's another way of saying, "Forgive people." "Forgive their evil," which is an all-inclusive term here. It can mean any kind of evil, any kind of bad behaviour. One Swedish philosopher said,

There's four types of evil. There's demonic evil, which is evil for the sake of hurting someone; you're trying to hurt them. There's accidental evil, which is an accident; you didn't mean it. There's no intention to hurt anybody. There's idealistic evil, which is done for an ideal. There's instrumental evil, which is done off-handedly.

But whichever one it is, Peter says, "You need to forgive it." When someone does wrong to you, you let it go.

Which goes to the next one he mentions, "not returning insults for insults." We don't know how Peter's readers were suffering here, but it appears that a lot of it had to do with insults. A couple that he mentions, insults here, and earlier in chapter 2 he mentions slander (in chapter 2, verse 12). Later on, in chapter 4, he mentions the word "Christian," which... And you can see that in chapter 4, verse 16, which is interesting, because the word "Christian" is only mentioned like four times in the New Testament. We use it all the time today. They didn't use it much back then, because it was a term of slander. It was supposed to be an insult. The Romans thought it was silly for anyone to worship a Christ or a crucified Christ. And so to make fun of the early believers, they called them "Christians" or "Christ followers". "But when that sort of thing happens," Peter says, "You need to forgive people." You don't return insult for insult; you don't get back at them. You let it go.

Instead, he goes on to say (and this is the second reaction he gives us) "You need to bless people. Not only do you forgive them, but you bless them and do good on their behalf." He says in the rest of verse 9, he says, "Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead, for you were called for this purpose, that you might inherit a blessing." And the word "blessing" means to do good to others. He doesn't go on and tell us what all the good is here, that you can do towards others, but he says, "This is why God saved you." He says, "You are called for this purpose; you were chosen to bless people."

Some of you remember, that in one of His parables, Jesus tells a story of a slave who owed his master 10,000 talents. You guys remember that story? Which actually comes to about \$7 billion in our modern-day economy. It's an interesting thing, a talent was a lot of money; this guy owed 10,000 of them. He owed about the price of the national debt, which means he must have been a slave somewhere high up in the king's government to do this. It was a sum he could never pay back. It was a sum he would probably never see in his lifetime. It was just an exorbitant amount of money, and yet, the king forgives him, he lets it go. And what does the slave go do? He goes and chokes another slave who owes him 100 dinari. A dinari was a day's worth of work, so that comes to about \$20,000-\$30,000. And if you remember the parable, it goes on to say, "The king threw the man in jail. And Jesus said, "My heavenly Father will do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart." That's what Peter is saying here, "If you don't forgive others from your heart, God won't forgive you. If you don't bless him, He won't bless you. God has forgiven you this many sins, and don't you think you could forgive people this many? God has blessed you this much in Christ, and you could bless people this much. He's done good to you a million times, a billion times, and you could do the same to others when they hurt you."

And Peter says this in verse 10, he says, "For 'The one who desires life, to love and seek good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'" That's all a quotation from Psalm 34, but "the eyes and ears of the Lord" is a way of saying "the focus of the Lord," "the intention of the Lord." "The Lord pays special attention to you when you do this," Peter says. "He sees and hears everything you do." On the flip side, "He sets His face against the wicked," which means He's going to punish them.

Friends, Peter is saying here, "This is how you stand out in the darkness; this is how you shine. You do all these things when you suffer. You're harmonious, and sympathetic, and brotherly. You forgive people, forgive their evil, forgive their insults." Listen, anybody can do good when the world is full of good, but what do you do when it's bad? That's what Peter's talking about here. Anybody can shine when the world is full of light, but what do you do in the dark? That's what makes you different.

To tell you one more story, on midnight, July 23rd, 1994, a mob of militant Hindus murdered Graham Staines and his two sons, Philip and Timothy. Graham was ministering to a colony of lepers, and some nationalists in the country heard about it. And they came, and they burned the Jeep where he was sleeping. And when the fire was finished, his body was found wrapped around the two boys, and they had perished in the flames. But the amazing part of the story is what Graham's wife and his daughters did after that. They stayed in India, and they forgave their enemies. And the next week, on the front page of the newspaper, they allowed the wife to explain why she did this. And she wrote this, she said,

I have only one message for the people of India. I'm not bitter. I'm not angry. I only have one desire, that each person of this country have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who gave His life for their sins. Let us burn hatred and spread the flame of Christ's love.

And as a result of that, people started asking questions. They wondered, "What kind of a woman would forgive her husband's murderers? What kind of people would stay in India after all this? What kind of God is this?" There were stories of people, at the time, asking, "Did we pick the right religion of Hinduism?" And friends, this is Peter's point, this is what people will ask when you suffer like this. When you do all the things that we talked about, they're gonna wonder, "What kind of God is this? What kind of people? Why would anybody do this sort of thing?" Tying this into the passage, when they see husbands treating their wives this way, and wives treating their husbands this way, with harmony, and kindness, and sympathy, they're gonna want to know why. They're gonna want to know why you behave that way. When they see employees submitting to their employers and Christians to the government, it'll have the same effect. They'll want to know, "Who is this God that you serve?" Friends, God doesn't use the things we do to get people's attention; He doesn't use our methods. I saw a cartoon, a picture, the other day, of Jesus talking to some superheroes. And under it, He was saying, "And this is how I saved the world. I didn't blow it up. I didn't beat people up. I didn't shoot them. I didn't flex my muscles. I died for it. I gave my life for it." God uses those kinds of things. And will you do that this morning? Will you give Him your life? He gave His life for you; will you give your life for Him?

Now, there are no easy answers to the problem of suffering, but there are answers, and this is one of them: God uses it to produce fruit in your lives; He uses it to make you stand out in the darkness. And let's pray this morning, and thank Him for that, and then we'll have the Lord's Supper.

Father, we do thank you, Lord, for what you have done for us in Christ. As we think of how He suffered for us, we are humbled to the dust and broken in ashes. Father, thank you for what He has done. Lord, I pray for those this morning who are going through tough times, that they would be encouraged to put into practice what Peter is talking about here, Lord. Thank you for the clarity of this passage. I don't know that I did it justice, but thank you for what Peter has expressed to us here, how we can behave in our times of trial. And Lord, as we come to Your table, as we come to the Lord's Supper, may You be glorified, as we remember what Christ has done. Thank you for His death; may You be honoured as we remember it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.