

20.8.23 am

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Date: 20 August 2023

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service this morning. Good to see quite a few visitors with us this morning and if you're able to stay behind at the end of the service there's tea and there's coffee served in here and it would be great to get the chance to to meet with you. The notices have been on the screen before the service began, I haven't seen them so I'll just step through them with you. Evening service tonight at 6, 6 to 7 and just for interest as well and for prayer, the South Harris communion season the weekend has been over this weekend so there will I assume be a fellowship at half past 7 in Liverpool tonight so I will finish for 7 so you can drive to South Harris if you're of a mind to do that tonight. So half past 7 tonight there's a fellowship in South Harris evening service at 6 here. Little Fishers is on on Tuesday, there was Ladies Bible Study Monday night as you saw, Little Fishers on Tuesday morning and just an intimation to say that we're very short of helpers for Little Fishers, that's the mother and toddlers group so if you're able to help out with this valuable work probably once every four weeks it's not a huge commitment. I think Alistair's the only one who comes week by week and makes sure everybody's doing what they should be doing but once every four weeks or so on a rota that would be excellent to allow that ministry to continue.

Rotary Recovery Tuesday night at 7 o'clock. Prayer meeting on Wednesday in person and on Zoom. This coming week we've got Martin and Joyce Campbell who are well known to you, who've been coming to Harris for many years and they're going to speak about their kind of journey as mission workers in terms of their work in Afghanistan, Australia and Thailand. So be encouraged to come to that, that's this coming Wednesday. Service is next Sunday, Sunday morning, hopefully I'll take that service myself. Sunday evening we'll have Dan Marig who's preaching and that's a Gaelic service, English fellowship after that. Deacons Court Monday 28th, that's a week tomorrow at half past six, take a note of that please and church cleaning note as you can see details there and then there's the Gaelic, I'm not going to try and say that though, I'll get it wrong.

The Gaelic mother and toddlers group meets in the church again this Thursday, 10 to half past 11, tea and coffee provided and there are crafts for the older ones. So again, take note of that.

I think these are all the notices. So let's begin this time of worship. We'll sing to God's praise. We'll sing from Mission Praise 1209, the words are on the screen and in this hymn we have the gospel and an expression of our thankfulness to Jesus for all that he's done for us.

My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my pain, who plumbed the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again, who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with his light and wrote his law of righteousness with power upon my heart.

[3 : 2 9] My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my pain, who plumbed the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again, who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with his light and wrote his law of righteousness with power upon my heart.

My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my pain, who floods my weaknesses with strength and causes fears of sinfulness and cause his fears to find, whose every promise is enough for every step I take, sustaining me with arms of love and crowning me with grace.

My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who reigns above, whose wisdom is my perfect feast, whose every thought is love.

For every day I have honour is given by the King. So I will give my life, my all to love and follow him.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer together. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day, and we thank you for the words of that hymn that we've began this service with.

[5 : 53] We thank you, Lord, for the message of the Gospel, for the good news about Jesus, good news for sinners like we are. And we thank you, Lord, for the way that that hymn takes us immediately to the cross of Jesus, to the most important place in all of history, to that moment of greater significance than any other moment in the history of time.

We thank you, Lord, for the Lord. We thank you that Jesus, your Son, our Saviour, went willingly to the cross. And we thank you that he went for us. We thank you that he bore our pain as we've sang.

We thank you that he plumbed the depths of our disgrace. And, Lord, as we think even upon that line, we would confess our disgrace.

We would confess, Lord, that we are sinners. We look back even over the last few days since we were last gathered together in your house. And we confess that in our minds and with our mouths and in our lives and our actions and reactions, we sin.

We can think of times when we have grieved your Holy Spirit. And we pray that you would forgive us. And, Lord, we are also aware that there are many times that we are unconsciously sinning even.

[7 : 24] And you are grieved in your spirit, Lord. The Holy Spirit is grieved within us. And we pray that you would forgive us. We thank you that the depths of our disgrace has been plumbed on the cross by Jesus.

That Jesus has gone there. He has forgiven our sin. He has taken our sin upon himself. And we thank you that when we believe in him, we are given the promise that we have life again.

We thank you that Jesus is the one who took the curse of sin upon himself into his body on the tree. And we praise you, Lord, that when we are trusting in him, when we are believing in him, we are cleansed of that sin.

The curse is removed. And we are given the righteousness of Christ. What a thought to dwell upon. That we who are sinners are made righteous.

We are made like Christ. We are clothed in his righteousness when we believe in him. So we thank you for the cross. We thank you for the death of Jesus in our place.

[8 : 38] We thank you that death could not hold him. That on the first day of the week, he rose from the dead. And we thank you that every Lord's Day that we gather, we are reminded and we are called to rejoice in that wonderful truth that Jesus lives.

And that we live because of all that he has done for us. We thank you for the rest that we are promised when we come to Jesus. That rest that we thought about last Sunday morning.

And we pray that we would know that. On this special day that set aside, this gift that you have given to us, we pray. That we would know relief from the burdens and the responsibilities of our daily work.

And that we would find rest and refreshment in your presence. So we praise you Lord for the gospel. We ask that you would help us to believe each one of us.

And help us to be those who go out and who share the message of the gospel. With those that you put around us, near and far. We think of those who are ministering at Farrah Field.

[9 : 46] Who have given their lives to going out to tell people about Jesus. We think of Martin and Joyce Campbell. We thank you for your hand upon their lives. And for the work that you've called them to.

We look forward to hearing more of it this coming Wednesday. But we ask that you would bless them Lord. Lord bless all the places and the people that they have touched over the years.

We pray Lord for the work of the gospel. In the different places that we have a particular interest in as a congregation. We bring them to you. We think of the DPRK.

And we ask Lord for your work in that place. Which is very much under the radar. But we thank you that Lord Jesus you are building your church in that place.

And we thank you that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. So we pray for that country. We pray for Nepal as well. A place that we've had a connection with over many, many years.

[10 : 46] And we ask Lord for the work of the gospel to progress there also. We pray for Kirstie and for Angus as they prepare to return back there soon. And we ask that you would guide them and that you would lead them.

Pray for Romania. We think of John Lachie as he is out in Romania at present. And we ask that you would bless that ministry to young people over in Romania.

We pray for Peggy as well as she serves on the board of Children for Christ over there. And we ask Lord for all those who have been reached over this summer through these camps in Romania.

And we ask that you would bless them and that the seed of the gospel may take root there. As we pray that it would take root here to the holiday club that we've just had in the weeks past.

We pray Lord for Malawi. We think of Nurse Marion as she goes out there year by year. And again Lord we pray for all those who have been touched through that.

[11 : 46] We pray for Japan. As we think about Richard and Emma. And we ask that you would continue to work in that country as well. We thank you that all people on earth to dwell are called to praise the Lord with cheerful voice.

So we ask Lord for the work of the gospel to progress. That the kingdom of darkness would be defeated. That more and more people would look to and trust in the Lord Jesus.

And we pray for our nation. Once bright with gospel witness now. Very much dark. And we ask Lord that you would have mercy upon us.

Help us Lord we pray. To be ambassadors for Christ in this place. We pray for Innes McSween as we heard your word through him last Sunday morning. We pray for Tornagrain that church plant.

And we ask Lord that you would bless that work. We pray for all the other plants of churches and around our nation in the past few years.

[12 : 49] And Lord we pray that you would help us in every endeavor to reach out with the gospel. Whether it's through Little Fishes or Road to Recovery. Or whether it's in conversation in the shop or in our workplace.

Enable us we pray to be ambassadors for Christ. Christ we pray now that you would continue with us. That you would lead us and guide us. That we would worship you in spirit and in truth.

And we pray for those who would desire to be with us but who can't be here today. We think especially of those who are ill. Those who are in hospital. We pray especially for Shona.

And we ask Lord that your hand would be upon her. As her condition seems to go up and down. And it seems very unpredictable day by day.

We ask that you would draw near to her. Lord that the infection that she struggles with would be fought back. That her mind would become clearer as the days go on.

[13 : 48] That her mobility would be good over the weeks and months ahead. Lord we pray that if it be your will you would lay your hand of healing upon her. And that she and all the family would know your touch and your presence.

And in this storm that they're going through. And for others Lord we pray for your hand upon them. We think of Shawnee as well from Kailas. We think of others perhaps not in hospital.

But who are at home ill at this time. We pray on for those who are grieving. We pray on for those who battle with addictions. We pray for those who feel low and depressed.

We thank you that whether we are in the depths. Or whether we are in the heights. We can call out to you as our Lord. And you hear our prayers. And you help us. So bless us we pray.

Be with those visiting with us today as well. We thank you for them. We ask that they may know refreshment. In this time of holiday in Harris. And Lord we pray for our own people who are on holiday as well.

[14 : 48] That you would bless them and refresh them. Make them a blessing wherever they travel. So hear our prayers. Take away our sin we ask. And we pray all this in Jesus name. And for his sake.

Amen. Boys and girls would you like to come out please. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Take your hat with you Ben.

Ben go and take it. Finley. Finley. Go and get his hat. Quickly. You go and get the hat. Don't worry Ben.

He's not going to steal it. Amen. Thank you. That's it. That's mine. He says. That's it. You come over here. Good stuff.

Over right over here. now I'll start talking just so there's no no stress Lois you go and grab them and take them over come on Ben come over here I'll take you over it's nice to be loved isn't it I was going to give you a different children's talk this morning but I think I'll change it last minute because if you look over there you see Ben don't you and what's different about Ben today Henry he's got a hat on and it's one of these yellow hats where do we see these hats we see them on firemen and fire ladies or fire people whatever the term is so we see them wear out when they're going into dangerous places because when you're in a fire the roof can become unstable things could start to fall so it gives protection for your head where else would we see these kind of hats these hard hats

[16 : 57] Henry or yeah Henry you go yeah building sites wouldn't you so when we were seeing the folks who are working at the pier for ages they had these hats on just like fire officers would have these these hats on so what are these hats designed to do are they are they there for style we've got a great model over there we love your hat are they are they just for style what do you think don't let Henry do all the work come on speak to me are they just for style or what do you think they're for Shawnee to protect your head isn't it so these kind of hats they're tested and they're really strong and they give protection for your head so if

Ben was to take a walk onto a construction site or if he was to go out with the the fire officers the dangerous place firefighters firefighters yeah thanks Michael you got me out of that one would he be safe would he be protected no well let's just pretend it's a real certified BS certified fire hat would he be protected with that with that hat yes yeah but he'd only be protected if he had the hat on wouldn't he you know you could own a hat but if you don't take the hat and put it on it doesn't do you any good so sometimes you do see guys on construction sites and they they'll be walking about and I don't want a hard hat don't want that don't need a hard hat but if something was to happen then their heads wouldn't be protected or cyclists we see the cyclists and they're going along on the on the the road and Adam could tell us

Mr. Johnson could tell us a story about that how there's protection for our heads if we have the the helmets on but if they're not on and they're sitting in the garage there's no protection is there now this morning we were we were singing and we were singing who were we singing about we were singing about God we were singing about about Jesus and tell me what did Jesus do for you Emily he died for us didn't he he died to take away our sin he went to the cross he died to take away our sin and what has he promised has he what's he promised to us Henry pardon are you helping out Michael he's promised us protection protection from from what protection from the devil protection from death because Jesus says when we're trusting in him he'll take us through death safely protection from hell he's promised us everlasting life that's his promise that's his offer but is everybody protected just

I mean Jesus died but is everyone in the world just now and throughout all ages is everybody protected and is everybody safe no so who's safe who's protected really Jesus protects us yeah and who who does he protect Lois he protects us if we believe in him and so just as as Ben takes the hat out of the wardrobe and he says I'm going to put this on I trust this is going to help me then God says to us in the Bible I want you to trust in my son Jesus says I want you to trust in me I want you to believe in me and it's almost like Paul actually in one of his letters he says he talks about putting on the clothes he says he talks about putting on

Christ and when we put on Jesus when we trust in Jesus he protects us if we don't put him on we're not protected and so the message today it's not the message I expected to be saying is look at Ben he's protected with that hat and lets us make sure that we're believing in Jesus that we're protected by everything that Jesus has done because he's promised he will protect us he will keep us safe forever if we believe in him so we'll pray heavenly father we thank you for this day and we thank you for your word we thank you for sending your son into this world and we thank you that when we are trusting in Jesus we are safe we are protected and we are protected forever we know that in this world still there'll be things that happen which make us sad there are things that happen which we suffer through but we thank you that you've promised that you will be with us in every situation like that and we thank you that you've promised

[22 : 44] Lord Jesus that when we're trusting in you even when we come to the end of our lives and we come to die we are safe we are kept safe and we are taken through death into life that's everlasting so we pray that none of us here today would know these things but not actually trust in Jesus we pray that none of us would know that there are robes of righteousness that there are robes that protect us forever offered to us in Jesus but we just leave them in the wardrobe help us we pray to to come to you Lord Jesus and say I believe in you take away my sin keep me safe forever and give me life that's everlasting and we pray all this in Jesus name and for Jesus sake amen we're going to sing now and we're going to sing from mission praise 323 and this is a hymn about trusting Jesus and then telling people about

Jesus when we're trusting in Jesus we're not ashamed of him and so we say to people in school we say to people in our work I'm believing in Jesus I'm trusting in him and we're going to sing now about that the glory of his cross Jesus my God I know his name his name is all

I trust nor will he put my soul to shame nor let my hope be lost for us his throne is promised that that he can well secure what I've committed to his land till the decisive are then will he own my worthless day before his father's face and in the new Jerusalem appoint my soul a place okay boys and girls if you head out to Sunday school and let's remember to pray for them as they go nice to see guys are back today we're going to turn to God's word and we're going to read from 1st Peter and chapter 4 1st Peter chapter 4 we've been working our way through this this letter over a while we took a break over the last few weeks and we're coming back to it this morning 1st Peter chapter 4 and we'll read from verse 12 to the end of the chapter dear friends says Peter as God the Holy

Spirit guides them dear friends beloved do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed if you are insulted because of the name of Christ you are blessed for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you if you suffer it should not be as a murderer or a thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler however if you suffer as a Christian do not be ashamed but praise God that you bear that name for it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God and if it begins with us what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God and if it is hard for the righteous to be saved what will become of the ungodly and the sinner so then those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good amen and may

God bless that reading of his word to us we're going to sing again now to God's praise and we'll sing from Psalm 25 Psalm 25 and we will sing the first three stanzas in Gaelic and you see the words there on the screen to thee I lift my soul my God I trust in thee let me not be ashamed let not my foes triumph for me and so on we sing the first three stanzas of the Psalm to God's praise in Gaelic we remain seated to sing in Gaelic Amen to it in the CHOIR SINGS

[29 : 38] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[34 : 16] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, we acknowledge, we give thanks that this is your word, that it's truth. And we pray that you would lead us and that you would guide us in the truth.

As we sang in the psalm, we pray that would be an experience today, that we would be led and guided in the truth of your word. And so we pray for the help of the Holy Spirit, that he would be our teacher.

And we pray that our eyes would be lifted from this world, that we would take our eyes off ourselves and that we would be trusting in the Lord Jesus. So hear our prayers and help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you could turn back now please to 1 Peter chapter 4. 1 Peter chapter 4, we're looking just at a short section from verse 12 to verse 19.

[35 : 38] And you can see that in that section, the subject that Peter is dealing with, or God is dealing with through Peter, is the subject of suffering.

Now, there are some things, there are some subjects, some particular things that we might try at all costs to avoid. And for me, moment of confession, it's wasps.

And I kind of put bees in there in the same category. I can't tell what they are from a distance. I know bees do good. Wasps, as far as I can tell, do no good for anybody, anywhere, at any time.

And so, I don't like wasps. I would like to avoid wasps. I love ice cream. I love the sunshine.

But I'd rather not eat ice cream in the sunshine than risk having a swarm of wasps buzzing around my face trying to get at the ice cream.

[36 : 42] I'd do almost anything to avoid wasps. And for you, it would be something different. It might be rats or snakes or spiders. Or I can tell by the expression of people's face, it is some of these things.

It could be boats. Some people will do anything. They don't want to go on a ferry boat. For some people, it's planes. They don't want to fly, though. They'll go over land and sea, but they will not get into a plane.

And for other people, it can be a different kind of thing. It might be confrontation or conflict. We'll do anything rather than face the risk of conflict or confrontation or showing emotion.

Some of us like to keep a very steady poker face on. We don't like people to see us going high or low. And so we'll make a joke. We'll change the subject rather than show emotion.

So there are certain things that we just like to try to avoid. And as we come back to this letter, this is a letter, remember, it's from Peter, the disciple that we know, the disciple that we love, the disciple of Jesus.

[37 : 56] He's written this letter as God the Holy Spirit has inspired him. And if we think about Peter, if we were to turn back to the Gospels and watch Peter and try to ask the question, what is it that Peter doesn't like?

What is it Peter would seek at all costs to avoid? The answer is suffering. As we track Peter going through the Gospels, he always wanted to avoid a course of suffering.

So when Jesus says in Mark chapter 8 that he is going to go to the cross, that he will suffer, Peter says, no, no, not that way.

No suffering. He's rebuked for it. But Jesus came to go to the cross. That was his mission. He came to seek and save sinners like us.

And if the wages of our sin were to be paid, if we were to be offered forgiveness, he must go to the cross. And so he did go to the cross. And as he went to the cross, Peter, who said that he would be there with him, no matter what, Peter scampers.

[39 : 07] He's at a distance. And a wee girl comes alongside him and says, are you not one of these disciples of Jesus? Are you not also part of that band that are now out of public favor?

And Peter, he denies the Lord Jesus three times rather than suffer. So Peter, he's somebody who didn't want to talk about suffering.

He didn't want to think about suffering. He certainly didn't want to experience suffering. That's the old Peter. That was back then.

But at the time of writing, it's around about AD 63, about 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. And Peter now is somebody who talks in this letter repeatedly about suffering.

Can't avoid it. Sixteen times in these five fairly short chapters, we find the word sufferer, suffering. Peter, in this letter, he emphasizes to these followers of Jesus, or those who are considering becoming followers of Jesus, that it is inevitable that we will suffer for Jesus' sake.

[40 : 36] And Peter, in this letter, he teaches us how to deal with suffering when it comes. Not if it comes, but when it comes. So he says five things.

And the first thing that Peter says is don't be surprised by suffering. Don't be surprised by suffering. Verse 12. He says, dear friends or beloved in the other versions, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

Now, a surprise of any kind is only a surprise if we're not expecting it. A surprise is not a surprise if we're prepared for it.

A birthday party is not a surprise party if we already know that it's going to be happening at a certain time in a certain place. And Peter says to these believers, don't be surprised by suffering.

Now, already these Christians were beginning to suffer. Already they were experiencing what Peter describes in verse 12 as a painful trial. And even if we go back to the very beginning of the letter, the first verse of this letter, we see that these believers, these Christians, they had been driven out of their homes.

[41 : 59] They had been dispersed. They had been scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They had been evicted from their homes, separated from their families.

Why? Because they were known to be followers of Jesus. So at the time of writing, these believers, they already were suffering.

But things were about to get a whole lot worse. Because within a couple of years, a leader called Nero, the emperor, was going to come into power.

And he had a hatred for Christians that was literally devilish. And so the heat of persecution that these believers were experiencing was about to be turned up to maximum.

And that would be a surprise. And so the Lord uses Peter to prepare these believers in advance. And he says to them, don't be surprised by the suffering that you are experiencing and you're about to experience.

[43 : 21] Now if we take a moment and just think about how this impacts us here and today. How much do we suffer today here in the UK, in Harris, wherever you are? How much do we suffer as Christians?

Well I think the answer is not much, comparatively speaking. But probably more than we used to.

And when we do suffer, and likely it will increase over the coming of the years, when we do suffer, it usually takes us by surprise, doesn't it?

When we suffer for Jesus' sake, somebody's unkind to us, somebody does something, and it's because we're a Christian, it usually shakes us. And it causes us to say, why is this happening?

Have I done something wrong? Why am I feeling this? It surprises us. And Peter says to us in his letter, it shouldn't surprise us.

[44 : 34] Don't be surprised by suffering, says God through Peter. And Peter is simply passing on what Jesus taught him. John 15, Jesus said in verse 18 to the disciples, if the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That's why the world hates you. Remember what I told you, says Jesus.

A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. You will suffer.

So, if you or I get ghosted, as the young people nowadays say, if somebody no longer answers our calls, our texts, no longer really has anything much to do with us, because they realise we're a Christian.

Don't be surprised, says Peter. Don't let that shock you and unsettle you. Or if you get shot down, and people say unkind things, because you're a Christian.

[45 : 55] Don't be surprised, says Peter. Or if you get held back, and you don't get a promotion, because you put Jesus before work, or you don't get a place in the team, because you put Jesus above sport.

Don't be surprised, says Peter. Don't think something strange is happening to you. This is what we have to expect, if we're going to follow Jesus closely.

So don't be surprised by suffering. Maybe I should just say at this point, if there is somebody here who would profess to be a Christian, and who knows nothing of suffering, who never gets ghosted, who never has to endure an unkind word, who never experiences anything in terms of opposition, for Jesus' sake.

If there's somebody here, who's reading this letter and saying, I don't know what on earth Peter's talking about. Then, the application for us in that situation, is to, is to really ask the question, am I a Christian at all?

Because if we are Christians, we will know something of this. If this passage is a surprise to us, and it's completely alien to our experience, we have to ask the question, am I really a Christian at all?

[47 : 39] One of the commentaries, I can't remember which one it was, and I think it was a Chinese pastor, who was speaking with a Western pastor, and they were talking about their experiences, and the Chinese pastor had scars, for Jesus' sake.

The Western pastor, you know, had nothing. And, when the Chinese pastor asked him, well, why do you think that is?

Do you think that's right? He said, well, it's just, it doesn't happen in our culture. And he said, don't you think it should? I wonder, maybe, are you not speaking about Jesus enough?

Is that why you've got no scars? Is that why nobody has a go at you? Is it because you're not speaking about Jesus? Don't be surprised by suffering, says Peter.

The second thing he says is, don't be saddened in suffering. That's the second point. Don't be saddened in suffering. Verse 13 and 14, but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that it may be overjoyed, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

[48 : 59] If you're insulted because of the name of Jesus, you are blessed, for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Sometimes we can be given a recipe, and it's a strange looking thing.

I remember a year or two back, coming across a recipe for pizza, and it was self-raising flour and yogurt. And I thought, that can't be right.

Yogurt's for pudding, it's not for pizza. It's not a recipe that makes any sense, but when I tested it, sure enough, it worked. It was a surprising thing, but it works, and I've tried it.

And Peter here, he's giving us a strange recipe. Don't be saddened in suffering, he says. And in the verses 13 and 14, he says, you know, take some suffering, add a few insults, mix them together in our Christian experience, and out of that comes great joy and blessing.

Not sadness, but great joy. And blessing in suffering. And this just seems so counter to our experience.

[50 : 15] You know, we want to experience joy and blessing, but we think that joy and blessing is found in the absence of suffering. And Peter says the opposite is true. So how does this work?

Well, there's two things, there's more than two things, but there's two things, at least, that he says, that we experience when we suffer for Jesus' sake. And the first thing is, when we suffer for Jesus' sake, we experience a greater fellowship with Jesus.

That's verse 13. think back to the Old Testament and Daniel chapter 3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace.

A horrendous situation. We'd expect them to be distraught and to be sad, but actually, but actually, what they experienced in the furnace was the presence of the incarnate Christ, the pre-incarnate Christ.

Jesus was with them in great fellowship in their suffering. And Peter, as he writes to these believers, he's saying to them, when Nero turns up the fires of persecution, yes, it will be difficult, but Jesus will be with you.

[51 : 36] And you will experience a rich fellowship with Jesus in suffering. That will bring great joy and blessing.

So how are we not sad and suffering? Well, we're not sad and suffering because we experience this amazing fellowship with Jesus. Paul and Silas could show us that in the prison cell as well.

They're battered, they're bruised, they're scarred, they're bloodied. We expect to see them crying, silent. They're singing songs of praise, they're praying, they're overjoyed, in suffering, because they experienced the fellowship of Jesus.

And the second thing Peter says in verse 14 is that when we suffer, we receive the help of the Holy Spirit. Again, in a special way, Weersby, the commentator, says, the Holy Spirit, he is the spirit of glory, and he has a special ministry to those who suffer for the glory of Jesus Christ.

So think about Stephen as an example of that, in Acts chapter 7. He's on trial. The whole of the authorities are on his case.

[52 : 53] He's told to stand up and make a speech. He has the chance maybe to say something that will pacify them, but rather than pacify them, he stands up and he proclaims Christ and the glory of Christ with great boldness.

And the congregation hate it. They pick up stones to stone him to death. And as Stephen approaches death, he isn't sad. But he's smiling.

He's filled with joy. Because he knows the blessing of God, the Holy Spirit, helping him. So Peter says to these believers in AD 63, and he says the same to us, don't be saddened in suffering for Jesus' sake.

And we can go to numerous Psalms. We have the same message. How many Psalms start with a Psalmist in a state of despair and distress and suffering and anxiety.

But just a few verses on, they end with great joy, courage, and faith. Bless it.

[54 : 13] Or think about Habakkuk, we'll come to the last chapter tonight. He's experiencing suffering. He's in a state of distress and alarm about the nation and the circumstances that he's in the middle of.

But as we come to the end of that book, the last words in that book are just filled with not sadness, but joy and blessing.

Blessing. Now, suffering is hard. I'm not trying to say that suffering is a minimal thing.

It's something that we can dismiss. Suffering is hard. There are some people in this room who have suffered much more than I've ever suffered. But the encouragement for us when we suffer is that we know that Jesus is with us.

When we're suffering for Jesus' sake, he's promised in a special way he will be with us. And when we're suffering for Jesus' sake, we will know that the help of the Holy Spirit in a powerful way and the reality is, and there could be testimony after testimony of this.

[55 : 33] The reality is that very often we experience more of the love and the power of Jesus in the storm of suffering than we ever do when it's calm.

very often, although we wouldn't choose suffering, there is immense blessing that comes through it because Jesus is with us.

And I suppose the greatest illustration of blessing through suffering is Calvary where Jesus suffered and Jesus died.

He laid down his life for us. And without the suffering of Calvary, there wouldn't be the joy of salvation and the blessing of eternal life.

So don't be surprised by suffering, says Peter. Don't be saddened in suffering. The third thing Peter says is, don't suffer because of sin. Don't suffer because of your own personal sin.

[56 : 54] Sometimes we can suffer because we are like Christ. People see Jesus in us and they rail against Jesus as they see Jesus in us.

Sometimes the reason that we suffer is not because we are like Christ, it's because we are not like Christ. sometimes I can suffer not because of sharing the gospel, but because of speaking a harsh word or being insensitive, being blunt and angular.

Sometimes we can suffer because of our own lack of wisdom and our sin. And so Peter is saying here, don't suffer because of sin. Think about it this way. You can go to a gym, you can exercise, you can lift weights and there's good pain, there's that kind of pain that builds muscle and builds stamina and there's bad pain that leads to injury.

And Peter says here, there's good suffering and there's bad suffering. If you suffer, verse 15, it should not be as a murderer or a thief or any kind of criminal or evil doer, I think it says in the other versions.

And that's a, it's an easy to follow argument. And we can think about the fact today that there are people who are suffering in jail because of criminality.

[58 : 16] There are people who are suffering in jail cells because they've committed criminal offences, they've sinned. And there can be people suffering in the same jail complex, not because they've sinned, but because they are followers of Jesus.

And they're both suffering in the same place, but for different reasons. And we might follow Peter's argument, which is very clear, and feel quite at ease over this.

And we might say, well, I don't think I'm a murderer. I'm not a thief. Don't go around robbing banks. Not trying to take people's lives.

You know, my criminal record is clear or it's short. So I don't think this is applying to me, but Peter's not finished. Peter says, if you suffer, verse 15, it should not be as a murderer.

I might say tick or a thief. Not done that. Or any other kind of criminal. And then he adds this little bit at the end, or even a meddler.

[59 : 28] And that kind of catches us and takes the wind out of us. A meddler. What's that doing on the end of this list?

What's a meddler? Well, a meddler is somebody who doesn't mind his own business. A meddler is somebody who's all over Facebook, checking all these different profiles that have nothing to do with him, to see what dirt they can find on the person.

A meddler is someone who pokes his or her nose into the affairs of others and causes all manner of trouble because of that. So Peter says, don't suffer because of murder, theft, evildoing, or being a gossip, being a meddler.

Now, surely that doesn't happen in churches. surely in small communities there's no meddlers to be seen. But we know how much this speaks into our experience.

We know how easy it is in a small community to be drawn into the gossipy conversations about other people's affairs. others. And we know how much trouble often comes through these kind of conversations that are not our business.

[60 : 58] And we know how many relationships can so quickly fall apart because of meddling. So as we look into the mirror of God's word, we are simply called to repent of any of the sins that we see.

Peter says to us, turn away from murder, turn away from theft, turn away from evil doing, and turn away from meddling.

don't let the sin of meddling, gossip cause trouble and strife and suffering to you or to the people that you've spoken about.

And I think the greatest example we have is Jesus. Yes, he is our saviour. He is one that we trust. He is also an example. Think about Jesus.

He didn't live in some huge city, on top of some skyscraper. Jesus lived in a small community like this, about the same size as ours.

[62 : 27] And he was part of a small travelling congregation out of twelve disciples. disciples. And he saw everything that they did. And he heard every word that they spoke.

And he even was able to discern every thought in the minds of the people around him, including Judas. And yet he never stirred the pot of strife.

Never gossiped. gossiped. Never said to James and John, don't you think Peter is getting a bit of a big head just now? Maybe he needs to come down a bit. Never looked in Judas' direction and turned to Peter and said, I'm not sure about that one.

What do you think? Nothing. He never meddled. He never suffered because of his sin because he never sinned.

But he suffered for our sin. For our murder, for our theft, for our criminal activity, for our meddling, for our gossiping.

[63 : 44] He suffered for that so that we might be saved if we trust him. So Peter says, don't suffer because of sin. Don't suffer because of your own lack of wisdom, your own un-Christ-likeness.

Don't be surprised by suffering. Don't be saddened in suffering. The next thing he says is don't be ashamed to suffer. Verse 16, however, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

Again, the lesson is really clear, it's straightforward, and it's simply that we're not to be ashamed of Jesus. even though the world might not approve of Jesus, and increasingly we know that in our own country, the world does not approve of Jesus.

Even though we might suffer for being known as Christians, we're experiencing more of that. Peter says, don't be ashamed. And I think that was a hard thing for Peter to write.

as we go back to Peter and visualize him in his study, don't you think that was a hard line for Peter to write?

[65 : 00] Because as Peter wrote, almost certainly he was thinking back to the night that he was ashamed of Jesus. Almost certainly as Peter wrote that verse, he was thinking back to that night when he denied Jesus three times, because he was ashamed of him.

He didn't want to be known as a follower of Jesus. He didn't want to be known as that band of disciples who were with Jesus. He was ashamed of him. And Peter wept bitter tears because of that sin of being ashamed of his Lord.

But Peter had repented and Peter was forgiven. And Peter was restored. And now Peter is teaching us not to be like him on that night.

Not to be ashamed. But to praise God, to own Jesus, even in and through suffering.

God will be to God. And I think in terms of application here we should pray for our young ones who are growing up in a world that is less and less tolerant of Jesus.

[66 : 28] There's quite a few young ones here in the building and in this room here and outside. they're growing up in a different world to the world that many of the more mature people in the room grew up to.

So let's pray for them. Pray for the students who are going or going back to universities and academic institutions that would be critical of Jesus and would hold up the word of God and call it untrue and dangerous and bigoted and all these things.

Pray for these young ones. You know it's so easy to deny Jesus. It's so easy to be ashamed and to go silent as Peter did just to avoid suffering but their calling and our calling is not to be ashamed of Jesus.

even when it brings suffering. Maybe a word about communion as well.

What are we three, four weeks away from the communion season again where the table is set and where the invitation goes out and we hear the word of Jesus saying all who are loving me, all who are trusting me, do this in remembrance of me.

[67 : 55] Don't be ashamed to own me. Perhaps there's someone in here who's a Christian and has been for years and maybe decades but secretly don't be ashamed of the name of Jesus.

Don't be ashamed to sit at his table. Don't be ashamed of him even though it might draw the criticism of your family, even though it might draw the ridicule of some of your friends, don't be ashamed of him.

Come forward. And own him as your Lord and your saviour. Don't be ashamed to suffer. And the last thing, just a word, Peter says, don't be sidetracked by suffering.

Don't be sidetracked, don't be distracted by suffering. I was watching one of these short videos the other day and I think I can't remember what the title was, it was something to do with distraction and it was one of these videos where you see these dogs racing, these greyhounds race, and the traps opened, the mechanical rabbit went shooting off, all these dogs charging after the mechanical rabbit and then out of nowhere, a real live rabbit came scooting across the track and every one of the dogs saw it, got the smell and took off after the rabbit, none of them finished the race, they were all distracted, all these punters were probably distraught and a storm of suffering can very easily distract us, again Peter could tell us about that when he was on the water and the waves started to crash in and he looked not at Jesus but he looked at the waves and when he looked at the waves he sank and when things get rough in our lives and when a storm of suffering blows in it's very easy for us to take our eyes off

Jesus, it's very easy for us to lose focus on the mission that we've been given and Peter is teaching us not to do that. Verse 17 and 18 for the time of judgment to begin with the family of God and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God and if it's hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

- [70 : 28] What's Peter saying here? Well he's saying a storm of persecution is coming. It's partly here but it's going to get worse, it's coming and it's going to hit the family of God.
- It's actually going to show who's in the family of God and who's not. It's going to separate the sheep from the goats. It's going to reveal who's a real Christian and who's a fake Christian. And Peter's saying when that storm comes in, when the suffering intensifies, it's going to be difficult but don't be sidetracked by it.
- Don't let the self-pity that very easily takes hold of us when we suffer take us off mission. And what was their mission?
- Well their mission was verse 17 to reach out to those who do not obey the gospel of God. Their mission was to reach out to the ungodly and the sinner, what we all were and are apart from Christ.
- And Peter is saying what will become of them, what will become of those who are lost if we don't stay on mission and tell them about Jesus?
- [71 : 46] one commentator says instead of being concerned only about ourselves we need to be concerned about the lost sinners around us. Our present fiery trial is nothing compared with the flaming fire that shall punish the lost when Jesus returns in judgment.
- And that's a sobering line. our present fiery trial is nothing compared with the flaming fire that shall punish the lost when Jesus returns in judgment.
- And so Peter says tell them about the Savior. Tell a lost world that they need to meet Jesus as Savior.
- not as judge. Don't be sidetracked from mission. Don't be sidetracked by suffering says Peter.
- So then verse 19 those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good.
- [73 : 07] That's where Peter finishes. He says commit yourself morning by morning to God the one who is faithful and he will give us the strength to continue doing good for Jesus sake.
- He will give us the strength to keep on keeping on even through suffering. God pray.
- Heavenly Father we thank you for your word. We feel the challenge of it and the conviction of it. We know little of the suffering that Peter experienced although we are conscious that there is a rise in the level of suffering that we are exposed to.
- Help us we pray to be faithful. Help us we pray to keep our eyes on Jesus to keep on telling people about Jesus. Help us not to go silent not to be ashamed but to keep on sharing the gospel in a world and in a country at a time when there is less and less tolerance.
- We thank you for this letter. We thank you for your word and we thank you that we are able to trust you Lord Jesus as our saviour. We thank you that you suffered more than we can ever comprehend so that we could be saved.
- [74 : 43] So help us we pray when we have a little suffering to endure to look to the cross and to stand firm as we think about your great love for us.
- And we ask this in Jesus name. Amen. We'll sing to finish 482 in Mission Praise. Nearer my God to thee.
- Nearer my God to thee nearer nearer nearer nearer nearer my God Nearer to Thee, nearer to Thee.
- Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down, darkness be over me, I rest as storm.
- Yet in my dreams I be, nearer I call to Thee, nearer to Thee.
- [76 : 45] There let the way appear, stands unto heaven.

All that Thee sendest be, in mercy hear. Angels to beg of me, nearer I call to Thee, nearer to Thee.

Nearer to Thee, than with my waking thoughts, right with Thy praise.

Out of my story reads, let the love raise. So high, high, high, close to Thee, nearer I call to Thee.

Nearer to Thee, nearer to Thee. All rattle joyfully, leaving the sky.

[78 : 21] Sandler and stars for God, upwards of Thine. Still all my song shall be, nearer my God to Thee.

Nearer to Thee, nearer to Thee. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.