

LEMONADE

Growth Opportunities, 2 Peter 3:18

A Warning to Believers

2 Peter 3:17-18 (KJV) 17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

- The believers were suffering from persecution and false teachers that crept in the church
- Peter said that in these difficult times continue to be watchful for false teaching
- In times of suffering, we sometimes want relief so badly that we will accept almost anything as true
- In this pandemic, people are buying “pandemic cures” that have not been tested or proven, people have lost money through pandemic financial scams, people are even people fooled by false teachers who are perverting the Word claiming to have power to heal COVID-19
- What Peter is telling us is we must be on guard during seasons of suffering because it is possible to fall from our position of strength and steadfastness in God
- Seasons of suffering, trials, and adversity can either *hinder or help* our spiritual growth
- We must decide what we are going to *do* with our suffering
- Will the suffering related to this pandemic be a time of greater spiritual growth and maturity or will we endure it with nothing to show for it?

See God’s Purpose for Suffering

- God wastes nothing, including our suffering, trials, and the adversities of life
- God uses suffering to:
 - *Get our attention*
 - There is nothing like suffering that gets attention
 - During this pandemic, people you would have never thought of are publicly saying they are praying for America, first responders, those that have died, etc.
 - Suffering will cause you to think about how you’re living your life
 - *Build your Christian character*
 - When all is well, it’s “easy” to call ourselves Christian, but it’s in the heat of trials and the furnace of affliction we become more like Christ

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- It's during the time of suffering that we develop our prayer life, daily devotions, commitment to God, our ability to withstand the attack of the enemy
- Knock down our pride
 - When things are going well, pride is a great risk
 - We begin to think we are the "source" of our blessings
 - We exalt our accomplishments or our things instead of exalting God
 - God will use suffering to humble us **2 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT2) even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.**
- Cause us to seek God's help
 - As Christians, we were never meant to "independent" people, but people who are completely *dependent* on God for everything
 - Sometimes we do things without consulting God, and God may allow them to have results we were not expecting to remind us of how much we need Him **Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) 5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.**
 - God knows what is best for us. We must trust Him completely in every choice we make.
 - It doesn't mean we omit careful thinking or the counsel of others
 - Additionally, we are to bring our ideas and decisions to God in prayer; use the Bible as our guide; and then *follow* God's leading.
- To correct us
 - God can and does use our suffering, trials, and adversity to discipline our lives
 - The suffering helps us remember who we are, how we are to live, and the effect sin has on our lives
 - God's goal is to bring us back into *spiritual alignment* with Him

Grow in Grace

2 Peter 3: 18 (KJV) 18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

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- Instead of allowing suffering, trials, and adversity to cause us to lose ground, Peter encourages us to respond to the challenges of life by doing two things 1) *grow in grace* and 2) *in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*
- *Grow in Grace*
 - We are to grow *in* God's grace
 - Spiritual growth is the *expectation* of every believer
 - But not just "any" growth, but *spiritual* growth
 - Just because something growing doesn't mean it's a good thing
 - God wants us to grow in grace
 - Growing in grace is growing in God's favor, spiritual conviction, obedience to God's word, spiritual strength, love, awareness and use of our spiritual gifts, prayer life, devotion to God, service to God, etc.
 - Growing in grace is not "instant", but there should be *continual* spiritual progress over time
 - Growing is an agricultural/horticultural term suggesting there is some *cultivation* that's required to promote growth
 - Our nurture, care and attention to the things of God promotes our spiritual growth
- *Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*
 - The knowledge of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord is *foundation* of our faith and *we grow or build* on that foundation
 - Our spiritual growth started as *babes in Christ* with our accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord
 - We may *start* as babes in Christ, we must not *stay* babes in Christ **1 Peter 2:2 (KJV) As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:**
 - Once we see our need for God's Word and begin to find nourishment in Christ, our spiritual appetite will increase, and we will start to mature.
 - **Question:** How strong is your desire for God's Word?
 - As we grow, our appetite for God Word increases
 - He's not only our Lord and Savior, He's The Way, The Truth, the Life, The Bread of Life, The Light of the World, The Resurrection, my Counsellor, my Shepherd, the Preserver of my life, etc.
 - We are to continue developing *deeper roots* in Jesus and building on the *firm foundation* that is Jesus Christ

Spiritual Growth from Suffering

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- Spiritual Growth is a product of the things we go through
- As we go through any degree of suffering, we will see how God has strengthened us in it **1 Peter 1:6-7 (KJV) 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:**
- God reveals our strengths and weaknesses
- We develop a greater capacity to endure difficult seasons in life **2 Timothy 2:3 (KJV) 3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**
 - We can endure suffering like Jesus did
- We can see God's plan to mature us as we overcome suffering and trials **Romans 5:3-5 (KJV) 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**
 - We will experience difficulties in life that help us grow.
 - We rejoice in suffering, not because we like pain or deny its tragedy, but because we know God is using life's difficulties and Satan's attacks to build our character.
 - The problems that we run into will develop our perseverance—which in turn will strengthen our character, deepen our trust in God, and give us greater confidence about the future.
- Suffering reveals our faith in God
- God is worthy of praise, even in suffering **2 Peter 3: 18 "... To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."**
- To Him be glory both now and forever
- We are to praise God *now*, don't wait or hold back your praise
- But be like Paul and Silas and give God glory while you're *still* suffering **Acts 16:25-26 (KJV) 25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.**
- Who knows, your praise may cause a *shift* in your circumstances **26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.**