

GROWTH GROUPS WEEK 7 WEEK OF OCTOBER 27



GROWTH GROUP FALL 2019 STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND: FINDING HOPE IN 1ST PETER WEEK 7 – OCTOBER 27, 2019 - 1 PETER 3:13-22

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Peter now moves into a discussion around Christian suffering. Peter reminds the believers that they have nothing to fear because of what Christ has done. As Peter had said previously when he quoted from Psalm 34, we are to seek peace and follow after it. Peace is not always easy to find and that is why we need to seek after it.

What is ironic is that Peter says believers are to be known for their good works, and yet when they “do” good things they may be mocked or criticized. The temptation is for believers to mock or criticize those who are critical of them, and then we become like the rest of the world. Thus, Peter says we need to know how to talk about our faith in a way that is gentle and respectful, and to revere Christ.

Those who follow Jesus are to be bold in their witness, but they are to do so with a clear conscience. Our boldness must be matched with a certain integrity that marks our lives. Our conscience is informed and shaped by God’s righteousness, but our conscience is also freed from guilt and the condemnation of sin because of Christ’s life and resurrection.

Martin Luther wrote of verses 18-22, “A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.” The proclamation to imprisoned spirits has been puzzling to people for centuries and is not easily summarized. Some say Jesus was preaching in the Spirit through Noah, others say that “spirits in prison” refers to fallen angels, and others argue that Jesus descended into hell and preached to the spirits of those who died in the flood during the time of Noah. Along with Martin Luther, we still affirm we are not quite sure what Peter meant.

The story around Noah’s ark for Peter points to people being rescued through the great flood and serves as a picture of baptism. Remember that Romans 6 talks about the idea of dying and rising with Christ. However, baptism is not just about being cleansed of the sins of our former lives. It is also what sets us apart for our work in the world today. We are saved “through” the water in order to live as a redeemed people in this world.

Peter ends this section by reminding his listeners that their baptism places them with Jesus. They do not need to despair, because Christ has been victorious, and because he has been victorious, they too will be victorious, regardless of what might happen to them in this world.



EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read 1 Peter 3:13-22

8 13 Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. 15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. 16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. 17 Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong! 18 Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. 19 So he went and preached to the spirits in prison - 20 those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. 21 And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 22 Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.

- 1) Dallas Willard was a well-known author and theologian who said, "Grace is not opposed to effort, it's opposed to earning. Effort is action, earning is attitude." He went on to say that if we want to grow spiritually we should "do the next right thing you know you ought to do." In our lesson today, Peter talks about doing good. Can you think of a time recently when you were eager to do good?
- 2) What does it mean to revere Christ?
- 3) Peter says we should always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that we have. If someone asked you, "why do you have hope?" what would you say?
- 4) Sometimes people are looking for a confrontation when it comes to speaking about the faith. Have you found a way, or can you think of a way, to share the truth of Jesus with gentleness and respect?
- 5) Romans 5:3-4 says, "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation." We know that Jesus experienced problems and trials on this earth, for our good. Can you think of a time when you have suffered, or experienced trials for doing good, or doing the next right thing? What did the suffering or problems produce?
- 6) Peter brings up the story of Noah who was faithful to God and suffered for following and doing what was right. He connects the waters of the flood with the waters of baptism. How does the story of Noah relate to our understanding of baptism?
- 7) Peter uses the words clear conscience in verses 16 and 21. What does it mean to have a clear conscience? How is the resurrection of Christ and our own baptism connected with a clear conscience toward God?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Peter writes to people that are either experiencing, or about ready to experience, suffering because of their faith. He reminds them that Jesus Christ has been victorious and now reigns in heaven at the right side of God. Their calling is to live into their baptism and trust Jesus. Is there an area of your life where you are struggling and need to be reminded that Jesus Christ is on your side and is with you?