

“Friends, when life gets really difficult, don’t jump to the conclusion that God isn’t on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner” (The Message Bible, 1 Peter 4:12).

While I have been preparing this sermon relating to theme of suffering, I also suffered spiritually. One of the days this past week, I received a call from a lady who asked me to come to see her husband suffering from cancer. She and her husband once visited our church (Houston) on Easter Sunday. A few hours later, when I visited to see her husband, he was on the way to his operation, and she was in a waiting room. Entering that room, she greeted me and told me about her husband, who has been suffering from pancreatic cancer. Before visiting the hospital, I prayed for the family and thought to myself that how I could comfort her with God’s Word. How could God help her and her husband while they have been going through their rough times?

In the midst of human sickness, especially painful disease, we humans desperately long for help. And many of us ask God for help – God’s healing power upon a patient, or the strength to endure those suffering times. Scripture tells us the comforting words:

“And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Peter 5:10).

When we face hardship, how can you deal with sufferings? I would say 3 Cs based on today’s Scripture text.

First, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another and under God’s mighty hand.

When I faced with personal hardship, first of all, I realized that I am a human. That means I came to humble myself before fellow human beings as well as God –God’s mighty power. Humbling means that I put myself under God and give up boasting myself toward other persons. Two verses inspired me especially: “Before I was humbled I went astray, but now I keep your word” (Psalm 119:67); “It is good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn your statutes” (119:71).

The Apostle Peter’s emphasis here is on the humility necessary for us to recognize how helpless we are apart from the "mighty hand of God." We are to own up to our weakened state. We do need help. We are not God. God waits for us to call upon God for divine help. Peter says, "Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you" (5:7).

Second, cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

All good parents are eager to help their children in their times of need. Quite often parents are embarrassed that their children did not call for help and got themselves into very deep trouble. Sometimes the call from the children comes too late. God urges us to call. God

stands over us as a father or mother and waits. The Prophet Isaiah assures us we can call. "You shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am" (Isaiah 58:9). We all know people who make life too difficult for themselves because they do not know how to ask for help. That they may feel asking for help is a weakness of character. This often happens to senior citizens who keep saying, "I do not want to become a bother or a burden for someone." Probably none of us want to let that happen to us in our time of need. Yet when we need help as the aged, the sick, or the immobilized individuals, we do our friends and family a better service by letting them help and cooperating with them. In our relationship with God, Luther would say, "Let God be God." Let God have God's way with us by helping us. God could not be more pleased.

Third, control yourself (discipline yourselves); resist devil's temptation, standing firm in the faith. The word 'discipline' can be applied to every area of our lives; student life, parenting life, physical workout, and spiritual life. Peter encourages us to resist devil's temptation by using spiritual disciplines – praying in the Spirit of God and meditating on the Word of God. The phrase "Be sober and be vigilant" reminds us how we Christians have to live, getting away from devil's temptations – misuse of money, unfaithfulness in marriage relationship, and corruption of power.

"You're not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It's the same with Christians all over the world. So keep a firm grip on the faith. The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ-eternal and glorious plans they are!-will have you put together and on your feet for good. He gets the last word; yes, he does" (9-11).

The following is the life lessons that we learn from the greatest flood disaster happened during Noah's time; title is "Everything You need to know about life, you can learn from Noah's Ark."

One: Don't miss the boat

Two: Remember that we are all in the same boat.

Three: Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.

Four: Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.

Five: Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.

Six: Build your future on high ground.

Seven: For safety, travel in pairs.

Eight: Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.

Nine: When you're stressed, float a while.

Ten: Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.

Eleven: No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.

NOW, wasn't that nice? Trust the Lord so that you might be sustained by God not only during good time, but also bad time. Amen.

Sermon Note:

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3Cs

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