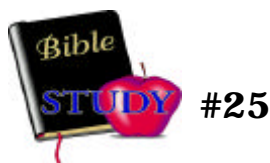


Journey Into God's Word



II Kings 1-8

Jeremiah 46-52

I Peter 1-5

Dear Friends,

When hurting people come to us, what can we say to them in the midst of their suffering? How can we help those who are suffering when our resources are limited and the situation seems hopeless? In **II Kings 1-8** Elijah and Elisha provide for us examples of how to help people who are suffering. **Jeremiah 46-52** and **I Peter** offer hope to hurting people. As we study these scripture selections carefully we will be better equipped to deal with suffering in our own lives as well as help others who are hurting.

The knowledge that we have been chosen by the Holy Triune God gives us the foundation we need to stand firm in a time of suffering. “To God’s elect... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood.”(**I Peter 1:1,2**) Being God’s elect, a people who have been chosen, means having a living hope even in the midst of hopeless situations. “In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power.”(**I Peter 1:3-5**) What do these 3 verses mean to you personally? How do you think the knowledge of “this living hope,” “an inheritance that can never perish”, and that “through faith” you “are shielded by God’s power” helps one to rise above the suffering of the moment? “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine. (**I Peter 1:6,7**)

What grief did Elijah face through all kinds of trials that are described in **I Kings 17-II Kings 1**? In spite of overwhelming odds, how did Elijah prove that his faith was genuine? What miracles happened as a result of Elijah’s faith that is

reported in the following scriptures: #1. **I Kings 17:5,6** #2. **1 Kings 17:12-16**
 #3. **I Kings 17:17-24** #4. **I Kings 18:16-46** #5. **II Kings 1:9-14** #6. **II Kings 2:6-8** #7 **II Kings 2:11,12**

Elijah's ministry often forced him to engage in direct confrontation with the powers that be. His successor Elisha did not need to be quite as confrontational. Perhaps the reason for this was that Elijah had made an impact because of his determination to stand up to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and the suffering their idolatry had brought upon the nation of Israel. Even though their ministerial approaches differed, both Elijah and Elisha had important ministries. Please look up the following scriptures and describe the miracles resulting from Elisha's faith: #1. **II Kings 2:13,14** #2. **II Kings 2:19-22** #3. **II Kings 4:1-7** #4. **II Kings 4:18-37** #5. **II Kings 4:38-41** #6. **II Kings 4:42-44** #7 **II Kings 5:1-14** #8. **II Kings 5:15-27** #9. **II Kings 6:1-7** #10. **II Kings 6:8-23**

When people are suffering, they don't need a pep talk, they need direct help. In **II Kings 4** Elisha did not tell the widow that he would pray for her and then left her without helping. "Elisha replied to her, 'How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house? Your servant has nothing there at all, ' she said, 'except a little oil.'"(**II Kings 4:2**) Then Elisha proceeds to let God work through him to produce an abundance of oil for the widow which she is able to sell and use to pay her debts. We see that Elisha cared about suffering people to alleviate their suffering. In **II Kings 4:32-37**, Elisha allows God to use him to raise a dead boy to life. Do you say that you also want to help people but can't multiply oil for widows or raise the dead? Perhaps not, but God can. You can let Him use you to feed a hundred people like Elisha did in **II Kings 4:42-44**. Perhaps you may not use the same method Elisha did, but you are reaching out and helping those who are suffering as Jesus told us to do in **Matt. 25:31-46**. "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."(**James 2:18**) "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."(**James 2:26**)

Yes it's hard to keep going when one is suffering. Yet Peter says that even in the midst of suffering one can be filled "with an inexpressible and glorious joy." "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him, and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."(**I Peter 1:8**)

The sins of the people of Israel and the people of Judah had resulted in tremendous suffering. They had not only been defeated by foreign nations, but they had been carried away into captivity. Yet God is a merciful God. In **Jeremiah 50:33,34** we read, “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well. All their captors had them fast, refusing to let them go. Yet their Redeemer is strong; the Lord Almighty is His name. He will vigorously defend their cause so that He may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon.’” What hope does this provide for you when everything seems hopeless? Please examine **Jeremiah 46-52** as Jeremiah proclaims God’s judgement on those nations that had destroyed Israel. For a people who found themselves in hopeless situations of suffering, how can believing God’s promises and prophecies that things will change in the future bring hope?

Suffering has a tendency to grab 100% of our attention. We can feel suffering. We can see the results of suffering. We can feel so defeated because God, whom we can’t see, seems so far away. In order to pray and believe at moments like that, our eyes of faith must be opened. Please read **II Kings 6:8-23** and describe the circumstances. “When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. ‘Oh, my Lord, what shall we do?’ The servant asked. ‘Don’t be afraid,’ the prophet answered. ‘Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ And Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha.”(**II Kings 6:15-18**) What happened after that? In what areas in your personal life do you need your eyes of faith opened? How can you help others “see” who feel overwhelmed by suffering? We can help those who are suffering by listening to their cries for help as Elisha did to his servant. Then we can do what Elisha did by praying for them. Our prayers can open their eyes of faith” in order that they can see that God is bigger than every problem and that “the Lord Almighty is His name.”(**Jer. 51:19**) Remember “since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understand from what has been made.”(**Romans 1:20**) So as you pray, obey what your senses show you about the wonders of creation. Then as you behold all that God has created, bring the problem and its suffering before Him. Know that the God you are calling out to, “He made the earth by His power; He founded the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His

understanding. When He thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; He makes the clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He brings out the wind from His storehouses.”(Jer. 51:15,16)

“The prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”(I Peter 1:11) How does **Jeremiah 50:17-20** look to the time Jesus will come back and rule with Israel fully restored? As we see the time approaching when Christ shall return, what instructions are given to us in I Peter 1:13-2:3 for daily living? “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”(I Peter 1:18) “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.”(I Peter 1:22,23)

We are not alone but “like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”(I Peter 2:5) You are part of a larger Christian community now. What spiritual sacrifices are you offering unto the Lord? How has it impacted your life that you are part of “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people belonging to God”? (I Peter 2:9) The rest of that verse goes on and gives the reason for such a special calling. What is this reason? Now, “dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”(I Peter 2:11) Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, gave into the sinful desire of greed in II Kings 5, what happened to him?

“Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.”(I Peter 2:16) When people are suffering, it’s easy to be rebellious. But rebelliousness and lawlessness do not relieve suffering but only make it worse in most cases. That’s why Peter says, “if you suffer for doing good and endure it, this is commendable before God.”(I Peter 2:21) Peter knew that Jesus’ suffering was part of God’s plan to give us salvation. He also knew that those who followed Christ were told, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his

life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”(Mark 8:34,35) Jesus died for our sins so we would not have to go to hell. He suffered in order that we may live. “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.”(I Peter 2:23,24) Why is faith in this fact so essential when we are suffering? How does our unbelief make suffering even worse?

Submission is not giving up. It is entrusting ourselves totally to God who we believe loves us and has the best intended for us. Whether it is submitting to the authorities describes in I Peter 2:13 or wives to their husbands in I Peter 3:1,2, Peter tells us how such submission can result in victory when he declares, “For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.”(I Peter 2:15) “They may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of their lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”(I Peter 3:4) Husbands are told if they wish to be victorious in their prayer lives they need to treat their wives, “with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”(I Peter 3:7) What further directives are given in verses 8-12 of this chapter?

Peter speaks of suffering in I Peter 1:6,7; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:9. When he speaks of trials and suffering in these verses he makes frequent reference to an unbelieving world’s treatment of the people of God. As believers who frequently suffer we must let our light shine in this dark world of unbelief. Trials and tribulations refine our faith (I Peter 1:6,7) and teach us patience. According to Romans 5:3,4 what does suffering produce? “It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”(I Peter 3:17) “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude.”(I Peter 4:1) As you study I Peter 4:2-6 what are you warned to avoid? What directives for victorious living are given in verses 7-10 of this same chapter? “How does being clear-minded and self-controlled help us pray better? (vs.7) What does love covers according to verse 8? How are we to offer hospitality? How are we to use the gifts God has given us? (Verse 10) “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very Words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.” (I Peter 4:11)

When you are trying to do good and yet it seems suffering is the only result, it is easy to give up. What does I Peter 4:12-18 say that our response should be? “So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”(I Peter 4:19) Think about it. God not only created the world but He sustains it. We see His faithfulness all around us in all that He created. Should we not trust that He would protect us even as we suffer for doing His will?

What directives are given to us concerning the ministerial responsibilities God has given us according to I Peter 5:1-5? “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering.”(I Peter 5:6-9) According to the above verses, what are you supposed to do when the devil tries to work on you during times of suffering?

When the King of Judah, the King of Israel and the King of Edom found themselves and their armies were suffering because they had no water they asked Elisha for help. “While the harpist was playing, the Hand of the Lord came upon Elisha and he said, This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches. For this is what the Lord says, You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and you other animals will drink. This is an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord.”(II Kings 3:15-18) At this moment you may be feeling dry and spiritually drained. The situation may seem hopeless on every side. The question is are you going to run or are you going to let God fill you with His refreshing waters of life? He is a miracle working God who desires to do miracles in and through your life, if you dare to believe. Elijah and Elisha believed and as you saw earlier in this study God did many miracle through them.

As recipients of the Words of Life we must be like the 4 men in II Kings 7:9 who came in contact with God’s miraculous provisions. “Then they said to each other, ‘We’re not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let’s go at once and report this to the royal palace.’” In the midst of so much suffering today God has entrusted us with the greatest message since the creation of the world. This

message is that, there is hope for Christ is Risen. Who are you sharing this good news with?

Please join me this week as we study together II Kings 9-17, Lamentations 1-5, and II Peter 1-3. “And the God of all grace, Who called you to His Eternal Glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power forever and ever.”(I Peter 5:10,11)

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice