

**[1]**  
**Following Jesus Today**  
**Future Glory**  
**1 Peter 1:3-12**  
**November 12, 2018 Pastor Jeff Geramo**

Do you ever wonder what it would be like to live in the New Testament era? What was it like to be in the church during the time when 1 Peter was written? Last week I read to you from the Roman historian, Tacitus, from that time who attested to the fact that followers of Jesus did not have it easy, to say the least. They had to continually live with the possibility that they could be severely persecuted, tortured, or killed, just because they believed in Jesus.

We have no way of knowing what that would have been like except to look in from the outside by stepping into the shoes of some modern day Christians in other parts of the world who have to live with the same threat today.

At our Fellowship Conference last week I had the opportunity to chat with a Lebanese church planter who has planted several churches in Muslim countries. I asked him if he had experienced persecution or if he knows of other followers of Jesus who had been persecuted because of their faith. He told me that they have experienced a tremendous amount of severe persecution. He recounted one story of a young muslim man who received Christ and gathered the courage to tell his father that he was turning from Islam to follow Jesus. His father shot him dead.

This is actually not unusual in many parts of the world. It's important to know that we are part of something bigger than Campbell River Baptist Church, and something bigger than Western Christianity, and that we have brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world who have some huge struggles because they profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

One of the reasons I love going to our Fellowship National Conference is so I can be reminded of these things. We are a part of something much bigger than Campbell River Baptist Church. God is at work all around the world.

If I were to preach through 1 Peter to Jesus followers in countries where they are experiencing real persecution because of their faith in Jesus, they would immediately relate it personally to themselves. There will come a time in Canada when we will be able to relate to the message of 1 Peter more than we do right now.

At the Fellowship Conference there was considerable time focused on the battle to maintain religious freedom in Canada because of where we are headed as a society. Our rights as followers of Jesus are being eroded. That is a fact. We will see it more and more in the coming years. I won't belabour that, but it is important to keep that in mind as we look at our passage so we can ask ourselves, what does it mean for you and me living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Campbell River? Who are we as followers of Jesus and how should we live so his mission can be accomplished through us?

Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, the *de facto* leader of the European Union, and an outspoken Christian said this of her country:

**[2]**  
**“Germany suffers not from too much Islam but too little Christianity.”**

I would say the same is true of Canada. What would Canada be like if Jesus followers really followed Jesus? It's very easy to point our fingers, judge others, stand against things and build up walls. What God has called us to is something different. He has called us to reflect the light of Jesus in an increasingly dark

world. That is what 1 Peter is all about. How do we follow Jesus in a world that is increasingly against Christianity?

[3]

### 1 Peter 1:1–12 (NLT)

***1 This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. 2 God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more grace and peace.***

[4]

***3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.***

[5]

***5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. 6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.***

[6]

***7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.***

[7]

***8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. 9 The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls. 10 This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you.***

[8]

***11 They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. 12 They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.***

As I was studying this passage and preparing for this message I struggled with how to apply this word that God has for us to our context today, because clearly the situation of the Christians in Asia Minor, when Peter wrote this, was very different than ours.

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Christians today in India, China, Pakistan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and many other parts of the world understand this far better than we can. These Jesus followers do suffer for their faith. Some of you may have suffered too, but certainly not like the early Christians did, and probably not for being a Christian.

Last week we looked at how the followers of Jesus in Asia Minor were given ultimatums that they either renounce their faith in Christ and worship the emperor or be tortured and ultimately killed. The most I have had to suffer is someone calling me a Jesus freak, or a Bible thumper. I can put up with that. All over the world, there are Christians who suffer severely for their faith. They are imprisoned, and tortured, and killed. In the Western World we do not suffer like that — yet. I guess it kind of baffles me because Paul told his protégé, Timothy:

[10]

### 2 Timothy 3:12 (NLT)

***12 Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.***

So, we have a couple dilemmas here. The first one is why are we not suffering? Secondly, how do we apply this passage since we aren't suffering the way they were?

Usually, because we do struggle to apply this passage to our context, we use examples of suffering like having a flat tire while on vacation. Or, catching a cold and having to miss church – that's suffering for our faith. And there are some Christians who might suffer because they act like boorish, arrogant, judgemental, finger-pointing know-it-alls. They don't suffer because they are Christian. They suffer because they act like idiots.

There are some ways that we legitimately suffer, such as losing a loved one, or struggling with our health, or having difficulty raising kids. These are very painful things, and I don't want to minimize these kinds of sufferings, because they are very real. But these kinds of things happen to everyone. They don't happen as a result of making it known that we are followers of Jesus. We have a pretty fair and benevolent government compared to many countries. We can openly worship God — so far.

We have freedom just like everyone – so far. Who knows what 20 years will bring? Think about what Canada was 20 years ago. We could pray in schools.

When I was in elementary school in the late 60's, we would say the Lord's Prayer every morning before class started. This was in the public school system. We can't do that today. That right has been taken away from us. It is becoming increasingly harder to stand up and be counted as a follower of Jesus in Canada. But, there are ways that we can behave respectfully so we have a better chance at having a voice.

When Ryan was invited to Carihi to teach them about the life and times of Jesus, the teacher made it clear that he had to be careful not to preach or try to convince the students. Ryan was very respectful of that, and as a result was able to share the Gospel of Jesus very clearly because of the questions the kids and the teacher asked. He kept the conversation going and has an open invitation to go back.

So far, in Canada, we have relative freedom of religion. In the situation in which Peter was writing, things were difficult if you professed to follow Jesus. If you were open about the fact that you were a Christian in the time when Nero was emperor, you could count on being persecuted.

That was the situation in which they lived, so it made perfect sense to them that Paul and Peter would say things like,

## **2 Timothy 3:12 (NLT)**

***12 Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.***

That was very true for them. It is not necessarily true for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century — yet. So, if you are not being persecuted for your faith, you don't have to feel guilty. You don't have to go around hitting people over the head with your Bible so you can feel good about being persecuted. Aren't you glad about that? There may come a time when some of us will have to suffer for our faith, but right now we have it pretty easy.

There are still some things we can apply to ourselves from 1 Peter. The same principles Peter was speaking into the lives of these first century Christians are true for us today. We all experience suffering of some sort or another. Some of you are struggling with your health right now. 1 Peter has some things to

say to you. Some of you may be concerned about a wayward loved one. Peter can speak into your situation. You may have relationship problems. You may be experiencing loneliness or financial difficulties. Maybe it's uncertainty about your future.

Whatever your struggle, and we all have them, there are some principles in 1 Peter that can encourage us to follow Jesus right where you hurt.

There are three threads weaving their way through this passage that we need to keep in mind as we follow Jesus today.

**[11 A-C]**

- A. Your Past Salvation**
- B. Your Present Faith**
- C. Your Future Hope**

Peter begins by telling these followers of Jesus, who are suffering severely, not to forget where they came from.

**[12]**

**1 Peter 1:3 (NLT)**

**<sup>3</sup> All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.**

He says to them, "Listen, I know it's difficult. I know that sometimes you feel like giving up. And sometimes you wonder where God is in your situation, but remember how God in his mercy saved you from your former life. Remember how Jesus was raised from the dead."

When I am discipling a new believer, one of the first things I do is talk to them about the importance of remembering that our faith is in the historical fact that Jesus died for their sins and rose from the dead.

**[13]**

I usually draw a train with an engine, a cargo car, and a caboose. And I ask, what drives your faith? If you base your faith on how you feel what's going to happen to your faith?

Let's say one day you are feeling great. Things are going well for you. You just know that God is with you. Your faith is strong. Another day, things aren't going so well for you. You have a bad sleep. You wake up with a bad start to the day and you wish you could go back to sleep, but you can't. There are too many other people counting on you. Everything you do is hard work. The little things that go wrong throughout the day seem huge. By the time you get back home after work or school, your patience is worn thin and you don't have the emotional fortitude to respond with grace to your family.

Can anyone relate to that? How do you feel about yourself and your faith when you lose your patience and snap at your spouse or someone who you are supposed to love? Do you get down on yourself? Do you wonder what happened to your faith? How's your faith if you base it on how you feel?

If your focus is on yourself and how *you* are doing based on your circumstances, you are going to be on an emotional roller coaster. It's so easy to base our faith on how we feel at any given time, but that leads to a very tumultuous kind of faith. When trouble comes our way, our faith is weak. When things go well, our faith is strong. That kind of faith is not faith in God. It is faith in our circumstances.

**[13a]**

Instead, Peter says go back to a fact. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead to give us life. That is a fact. It will never change.

**[13b]**

Our faith is in that fact. As we go through life with Jesus in community with other followers of Jesus, in the middle of all the hard things we experience, we build our faith muscles, and the feelings follow along.

We say this often at CRBC.

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**Nothing you can do will make God love you any more and nothing you can do will make him love you any less.** He just loves you, completely. This is a fact. Marinate in that truth.

When things don't go your way, or when you blow it, or when you feel like your faith is failing, remember how God in his great mercy, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, gifted you with salvation.

[15]

**1 Peter 1:3 (NLT)**

**<sup>3</sup> All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.**

So, we have been born again (another way of saying that God has given us spiritual life), not because our faith is perfect. Our salvation is not based on us at all. We are saved by grace through faith in the fact that Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins and was raised from the dead. Full stop.

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We may or may not feel like it. Our feelings may be up and down like a roller coaster, but our feelings have nothing to do with whether or not we are saved. Our feelings have nothing to do with whether or not God loves us. Our feelings have nothing to do with whether or not God is pleased with us. It's not that our feelings aren't important. They are. It's just that they follow behind our faith in the fact that God expressed his love for us by dying for us.

[17a]

So, number one, when you feel like your faith is failing, remember **Your Past Salvation.**

[17b]

And secondly, Peter reminded them of their **Present Faith.**

[18]

***<sup>7</sup> These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.***

What God wants to do as we walk with Jesus and learn from him in community, is to build our faith muscles so our feelings fall in line with what is true about God.

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**What is true about God?**

[20]

**What is true about you?**

You are more depraved than you care to admit. And yet, at the same time, you are more loved by God than you could ever imagine.

[21]

**Nothing you can do will make God love you any more and nothing you can do will make him love you any less.**

That is a fact. Your Father God is not like your earthly father. However good your earthly father was, your heavenly Father is infinitely better. Some people have a difficult time viewing God as their Father because of a difficult relationship with their earthly father. What God wants to do as you learn from Jesus in

community is to build your faith muscles so your feelings fall in line what what is true about how God views you. Then, as you walk with Jesus this is what will begin to happen:

[22]

***8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.***

The more we walk with Jesus in community, the more our faith will grow strong, and the more our faith grows strong the more our feelings will fall in line with our faith, and the more we will fall in love with Jesus. That is the journey of the Jesus follower.

[23]

So, the first thing Peter does is remind them of what Christ did in the past. Now he is saying, look at what is happening to your faith now, in the present, because of these trials. This gives us a picture of just how valuable our faith is to God. ***“Your faith is far more precious than mere gold,”*** Peter said.

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This may sound harsh, but **our faith is far more important to God than our comfort.** I don't believe God necessarily causes all of our pain, but I do know that God does not waste our pain. What do I mean by that?

We all go through difficult times. Life is not easy. Our cars break down. Our bodies fall apart. People we love disappoint us. Our lives don't turn out the way that we envisioned they would. Life is sometimes just plain hard. But, God does not want to waste the pain.

That is the message of Romans 8:28.

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**Romans 8:28 (NLT)**

***28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.***

God does not just cause *some* things to work for our good. He causes *everything* to work for our good. Everything. The number one thing that we can learn from any pain or trial is that God is trustworthy. He always has been, and he always will be. The Bible, from front to back, is a story of God's faithfulness to his people. He wants to use whatever we are going through to build our faith in him. It's more precious than gold.

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Someone once said, **“Too often we try to use God to change our circumstances, while he is using our circumstances to change us.”**

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So, when things are tough we need to remember **Our Past Salvation**, and **Our Present Faith** that God is refining through the trials of life.

And we also need to remember we have a **Future Hope**.

This thread is weaved all the way through 1 Peter and very much through this passage. Let's read this again and pay close attention.

[28]

***3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.***

[29]

***<sup>5</sup> And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. <sup>6</sup> So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.***

**[30]**

***<sup>7</sup> These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.***

**[31]**

***<sup>8</sup> You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. <sup>9</sup> The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls. <sup>10</sup> This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you.***

**[32]**

***<sup>11</sup> They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. <sup>12</sup> They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.***

We are living in a privileged time. We've talked about this before. We are living between "the already" and "the not yet."

**[33]**

This is the era of the church. It is the time since Christ was revealed. The prophets of the Old Testament, Peter said, searched intently in the law trying to figure out when that pivotal event at the cross would take place (V. 11).

We are in that time. We get to experience Christ's spirit working in us, conforming us to his image, and nudging us to follow him in faith. We live in a privileged time. As followers of Jesus, we have something that even the angels don't have. We share an intimacy with God that is so precious. Our faith is so precious to him.

If we are going to be the people God wants us to be in this precarious time, we must remember these things.

We need to remember who we are and the benefits we have in Christ. We need to remember that the things we go through on earth, even the suffering, are meant to refine us and make our faith strong. And we need to remember where we are going. Here's what Paul said to the church in Rome:

**[34]**

**Romans 12:12 (NLT)**

***<sup>12</sup> Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.***

In closing, I want to read an analogy of the Christian life called, *The Road of Life*. The author is unknown.

**[35]**

**The Road Of Life**

(Anonymous)

At first, I saw God as my observer, my judge, keeping track of the things I did wrong, so as to know whether I merited heaven or hell when I die. He was out there sort of like a president. I recognized His picture when I saw it, but I really didn't know Him.

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But later on when I met Christ, it seemed as though life was rather like a bike ride, but it was a tandem bike, and I noticed that Christ was in the back helping me pedal.

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I don't know just when it was that He suggested we change places, but life has not been the same since. When I had control, I knew the way. It was rather boring, but predictable . . . It was the shortest distance between two points.

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But when He took the lead, He knew delightful long cuts, up mountains, and through rocky places at breakneck speeds, it was all I could do to hang on! Even though it looked like madness, He said, "Pedal!" I worried and was anxious and asked, "Where are you taking me?" He laughed and didn't answer, and I started to learn to trust.

[39]

I forgot my boring life and entered into the adventure. And when I'd say, "I'm scared," He'd lean back and touch my hand. He took me to people with gifts that I needed, gifts of healing, acceptance and joy. They gave me gifts to take on my journey, my Lord's and mine.

[40]

And we were off again. He said, "Give the gifts away; they're extra baggage, too much weight." So I did, to the people we met, and I found that in giving I received, and still our burden was light. I did not trust Him, at first, in control of my life.

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I thought He'd wreck it; but He knows bike secrets, knows how to make it bend to take sharp corners, knows how to jump to clear high rocks, knows how to fly to shorten scary passages.

[42]

And I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places, and I'm beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful constant companion, Jesus Christ. And when I'm sure I just can't do anymore, He just smiles and says . . . "Pedal."

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**Isaiah 41:10**

***"Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am Your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious hand."***

[44]

Three things to remember while following Jesus in Campbell River:

- 1. Your past salvation.**
- 2. Your present faith.**
- 3. Your future hope.**

As we begin to live this way, Jesus will teach us and change us.

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Our feelings will begin to come in line with what we know is true about us and what we know is true about God. And then people will see the change and ask where our hope comes from. Be ready to tell them that your hope is Jesus.





**Following Jesus Today**  
**Future Glory**  
**Week of November 18, 2018**

**Objective of this study:** To see how God uses our trials to build our faith muscles.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us.]

**Welcome (5 minutes)**

How have you suffered for following Jesus?

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 13** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything "jump out at you"?**

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

**Word/Work (60-90 minutes)**

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:1-12.
  1. Find every reference to: 1) **Past Salvation**; 2) **Present Faith**; and 3) **Future Glory** (or hope).
  2. Who is God from this passage? What has he done for us?
  3. Who are we from this passage? What do we do? How could we live it specifically today?
  4. What are the barriers to living like this?
  5. How can we do it together in community?
  6. How are we going to do this with people who don't know Jesus?
  7. Now God help us because we can't do it.
3. When we are suffering, what do we need to remind ourselves of?
4. What does it mean to you that your faith is precious to God?

**Sermon Quote:** "What God wants to do as you learn from Jesus in community is to build your faith muscles so your feelings fall in line what what is true about how God views you."

**Sermon Quote:** "The more we walk with Jesus in community, the more our faith will grow strong, and the more our faith grows strong the more our feelings will fall in line with our faith, and the more we will fall in love with Jesus. That is the journey of the Jesus follower."

**Sermon Quote:** "This may sound harsh, but our faith is far more important to God than our comfort. I don't believe God necessarily causes all of our pain, but I do know that God does not waste our pain."

**Prayer**

1. Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. **Praise God together for how he works, and how he allows us to partner with him to accomplish things in his kingdom.**
2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:

- A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
- B. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
- C. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
- D. **Our missionary of the week:** Sandy Ewan with SIM. That she would get rest as she prepares to go back to South Sudan.
- E. **Local CR church:** Pastors Rick and Brenda Shuttleworth at Church of the Way