The Hope That is in You – 1 Peter 3:13 – 4:6

Lesson 5

Innocent Suffering

The problem of suffering despite doing what is right now becomes the subject of Peter's sustained attention. He begins this section with a rhetorical question in 3:13 that is very much like Paul's question in Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" This does not mean that you are bullet proof, just the opposite, but no eternal harm can come to us, and God rewards innocent suffering.

1. What kind of harm or suffering is Peter discussing in 1 Peter 3:13-14?

2. Innocent suffering is seen in the Bible as a good thing that will be rewarded. How else can you be a good witness in 1 Peter 3:15-16? What do you think he means by "keep a good conscience" in verse 16-17?

3. Why would God will it that you "suffer for what is right" (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2:15; 2 Cor 4:8-11, 2 Cor 6:3-10, 1 Cor 9:16-19)?

4. Why did Christ suffer innocently (1 Peter 3:18)?

- 5. 1 Peter 3:19-20 is a difficult passage. Which of the following interpretations do you choose?
 - a. Between His death and resurrection, Christ descended to Hades and offered to the already deceased spirits a second chance.
 - b. Christ just announced His victory over sin to those is Hades
 - c. Christ, before the incarnation, used Noah to preach the coming judgment to all the people before the flood. Because they were disobedient, their spirits are "now in prison." (see 2 Peter 2:5, Hebrews 11:7)

6. How did Paul defend his apostleship in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29? How did Paul come to grips with his pain and suffering in 2 Cor 12:7-10?

7. What did Jesus say about innocent suffering in Matthew 5:10-11?

8. "Therefore" in 1 Peter 4:1 refers back to 3:18 where Peter discussed the glorious results of Christ's suffering. What are we to "arm ourselves" with so that we cease from sin? If we accept suffering as the will of God like Christ did, might we begin to live for God instead of ourselves (4:2)?

9. The word translated "Gentiles" in 1 Peter 4:3 is literally the nations or worldly people in rebellion against God. How do the people who are opposed to God indulge themselves in v3? What do they expect you to do in v4?

10. What will be the fate of worldly people who live for themselves in 4:5? 1 Peter 4:6 is talking about deceased Christians, not preaching to the dead. Taken in the context of 1 Peter 4:5 about judgment day, will people who were martyred or maligned for their faith, say like Stephen in Acts 7:58-60, be vindicated by God?