

Growing Together Discussion Questions from Sunday's Sermon

(For Personal Study, Review, Meditation and Mid-Week Group Discussion)

May 12, 2013

- I. **Getting to know you** ~ *Questions for Group Discussion:*
- a. In America, do you believe Christians are simply being marginalized or out-right opposed? Where along the persecution spectrum would you place the Western Church?
 - b. Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome. What might Christians in America be falsely accused of?
 - c. Do you believe that Christians in America are more known for what they stand for or what they stand against? Is the central and foundational Christian message being opposed, or are the secondary teachings of Scripture being opposed? (For example: Is it the resurrection of Jesus that is under attack, or the Christian's position on gender roles?)
- II. **Getting into the Bible** ~ *Points from Sunday's Message:*
- i. *1 Peter* was written to instruct and encourage Christians to do the right thing and to have hope in the face of growing persecution at the hands of a pagan population.
 - ii. The repeated instruction was for Christians to live good lives.
 1. Live good lives – lives that glorify God.
Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (2:11-12)
 2. Live good lives – lives that put to silence false accusers.
For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. (2:15)
 3. Live good lives – lives that raise questions of “unreasonable” hope and silences slanderers.
Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (3:13-17)

4. Live good lives – lives that reveal a faithful commitment to the Creator.

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (4:19)

- iii. The repeated encouragement was that the Christians were God's chosen and precious possession and are, therefore, exiles and aliens in this world. Christians are chosen foreigners who are looking forward to the grace that will be theirs when Jesus returns.

1. *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion . . . Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1:1, 3)*
2. *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles . . . (2:9-11a)*
3. *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1:13)*

III. **Getting into Life:**

- a. There are many circulated publications that are chronicling the decline of America's culture and freedoms.
 - i. How do you respond to the publications that are intended to develop fear or produce anger?
 - ii. What is the proper Christian response to the decline of America's culture and freedoms?
 - iii. What would Peter say? What would Jesus do?
- b. When suffering for being a Christian continues to increase in America . . . What do we have to lose? What do we have to gain? What really matters?
- c. How does Peter's message of living good lives and looking forward to Jesus' return have a re-orientating effect upon your thinking and living in a declining America at this time?