

Title: TO RESTORE, ESTABLISH, AND STRENGTHEN, 1 PETER 4:12 – 5:11.
(Chatham, NJ; 06/05/11, AM) [Pt – Exegetical]

Theme: God will restore, establish, and strengthen us after periods of trial and suffering just like he promised through Isaiah that we will mount up on eagle's wings.

Purpose: To heal our wounds by reminding us that God will restore us in his own time and in his own way.

Introduction:

1. Isaiah 40:28-31 promises strength to the weary.
2. Peter's promise plays a similar note, 1 Peter 5:10.
3. Peter is all about the God who gives strength.
4. He writes to those enduring hardship.
5. Their hardship is brought on by their membership in the Kingdom.
6. The Kingdom of God gives meaning and purpose to their suffering.
7. Without the Kingdom and without the hope of the Gospel, suffering becomes only meaningless drudgery, but because of the Gospel hardships have redemptive value.

I. Suffering and Hardship in Peter

A. Trials purify one's faith, 1:6-7

1. Various trials have caused them grief.
2. Yet trials have served a redemptive purpose: purifying faith.
3. Faith is precious and it will result in praise, honor, and glory.
4. In the same breath Peter can talk about "inexpressible joy." (8)
5. That they serve a divine purpose at least provides the sufferer with an assurance that something good results from them.

B. Unfair, unjust suffering, 2:19; 3:17

1. Several times Peter demonstrates his realization that some trials are not fair.
2. Yet calls unjust suffering a "gracious thing" in the eyes of God (2:19-20), and he locates the meaning and purpose for it in the suffering of Christ (21).
3. He says, "...better to suffer for doing good...than for doing evil," (3:17).
4. He identifies some hardships: slander, being reviled for good behavior (3:16).
5. Yet he also sees this as an opportunity to share the hope of the Gospel.
6. Once again their trials serve a purpose.

C. Cease from Sinning, 4:1-4

1. Cease from sin = suffer in the flesh; it hurts to cease pleasurable habits, 1.
2. It hurts when former friends mock you as a result, 4.
3. Yet we are called to bless, not curse, 3:9, and this inflicts the hardship of denying the impulse to revenge.
4. These were Christians under the gun; the community rejected them, and their trials had grieved them.
5. He gives them perspective to help them cope.

II. Peter's Perspective on Hardships, Temptation, and Suffering (Various Trials)

A. They should not take us by surprise, 4:12.

1. Jesus told the disciples in John 15:20, "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."
2. Perhaps we are surprised because we have come to expect some version of the health and wealth Gospel in which God gives us all the good things we want and keeps us from all the bad things.
3. Peter in essence says, "This is the way it was meant to be."

- B. An occasion to rejoice, 4:13.
 1. He clarifies what otherwise makes no sense.
 2. We can rejoice because by sharing in Christ's sufferings you are known to belong to him.
- C. Linked to Christ's sufferings, 4:13.
 1. He fortifies the link that he made in 2:21.
 2. Jesus gave us the example; we follow him.
- D. In solidarity with others, 5:9.
 1. Others are suffering the same things.
 2. More than "misery loves company."
 3. This fellowship binds us to one another in mutual care.
- E. Connects us with God, 4:14 & 5:10-11.
 1. The Spirit of God rests upon us because of the insults.
 2. The glory of God is revealed to the world when we bear up under the insults and persecutions hurled at us. ("Blessed are you..." Mt. 5:11-12)

III. God Will Help Us, 5:10-11.

- A. Prior assurances in chapter 5
 1. God gives grace to the humble, 5.
 2. He will lift you up, 6.
 3. He cares for you, 7.
- B. Prior promises of vindication
 1. People will glorify God because of your good deeds, 2:12.
 2. Some will be put to shame because of your good behavior, 3:16.
 3. Others who revile you must give an account of their bad behavior, 4:5.
- C. God's power at work, 5:10-11
 1. Restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
 2. Roughly these are all synonymous.
 3. The key is that the power of God will see to our redemption from these things.
 4. It could be in some near future way that God sustains us.
 5. It could be at the last day that we'll be renewed.

Conclusion:

1. Remember the power of God, even in your darkest moments: Isaiah 40 reminds us that God will carry us on eagles' wings.
2. In so many words Peter repeats thematically what Paul says in Romans 8: we are more than conquerors.
3. Wait for God. He will strengthen and restore you.