

The Life of Christ Fuels Christian Endurance - 1

Peter 1:13-19

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[0:00] That's our new book that we'll be working through over the next couple months. It started last week on Easter Sunday. And as I mentioned in the call to worship, there are some basic divisions or reasons in this letter that kind of guide all of the imperatives.

There's some indicatives, as they say, that drive all the imperatives. And I mentioned three on this slide, which is the ransom, that we've been ransomed by the blood of Jesus, that Jesus is raised and alive and that he is returning.

The one that I failed to mention in the slides is that he is reigning. But you'll see these things layered throughout. You'll see these ideas layered throughout the letter.

For instance, if you'll look at the first verse of first Peter, you'll see first Peter, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

So right there, I mean, we've got essentially this word elect referencing what we've talked about previously in our time in Ephesians, the eternal decree of God. God acting in his for his glory with perfect skill from the foundation of the earth.

[1:18] And that theme will be continued here. That's the reign of the Lord over all things. And we could just move through and just see that these three, these four R's are sort of the dominant substructure of the book of first Peter.

Before we get into anything else, let me just throw this at you. OK, so this is a book written to suffering people. This framework is obvious. Throughout the passage, throughout the book. So the question is, what do I need? What are the four truths I should dwell upon when I'm suffering? That's that's what we've got right here.

Right. Like the four truths would be God is in charge and he is perfectly in charge. Number two, he has shed his own son's blood to rescue me from my sin.

And how will he not freely give me all things if he did not spare his own son? So he God is in charge. He's reigning to he has expended the ultimate price to save us.

[2:21] Three. Our God is alive. Three. Raised triumphantly after suffering, which becomes the new template for the Christian life. Suffering is a process that we endure to produce joy on the other side.

The resurrection becomes more than just a historical truth, although it is that. It also becomes the template for how we interpret our own suffering. And then fourth, the return of Jesus is coming. And when he comes, he makes all things new and he will wipe the tears from our eyes and there will be no more death and no more mourning and no more evil. So if you're suffering, those are the four concepts that you just want to churn through over and over again.

God is in charge. He has paid a great price for me. He shows his absolute commitment to vindicate those who suffer unjustly. And he is coming. And everything will be perfect one day.

And you keep those four truths running around in your head as you could be intentional about it or unintentional, probably mostly depending on your personality. But you keep those four things rolling around in your head and your heart.

[3:31] And the Holy Spirit animates those truths. And this is how Christians suffer well. Those four things moving around brought into life through the Holy Spirit.

That's how Christians suffer well. That's how you can suffer well. That's how I can suffer well. Okay. So let's just kind of underline a few pieces before we get into the fourth R or the third, depending on how we're thinking about this.

The return of Jesus is going to be our main focus today. And not, again, not in the exotic details of what happens when Jesus returns or when does Jesus return and all that. Simply the way that Peter roots endurance into the notion that he is coming.

He is returning. That's what we're going to spend our time thinking about today. I provided some proof texts that show you kind of different places where the ransom idea is brought forward or the resurrection idea is brought forward or the return idea is brought forward.

But now I want to point you to just, we're going to work through the first chapter today and use it as a bit of an overview for the whole book. I want to point you to, we were just in Ephesians.

Ephesians, I want you to think about how different the language is in first Peter versus Ephesians.

[4:46] And I would just say that if you'd read them together, which we don't have time to do right now, but you know, it's something we've kind of done. We were in Ephesians for quite some time and now we're in first Peter. One of the things would stand out in terms of similarities is that they both have this theological section and then an application section.

They both root all of their imperatives, all the things you're supposed to do. And indicatives. There's a lot of similarities there. Same gospel, of course. But the difference that I noticed having read them in close proximity is, is that Peter is speaking with a lot of vivid imagery.

He's using phrases like living hope and sprinkled with the blood and elect exiles. There's these prepositional things that he's doing. Inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and so on and so forth.

Tested by fire. Lamb without blemish. Ransomed from your futile ways. Paul's language in Ephesians is much more just matter of fact, this is the truth.

I mean, he does break into some doxology a few places. But Peter's imagery is pretty, pretty noticeable. He's really writing the way that our, you know, what would it be?

[5:56] Like our, our freshman literature teacher taught us to write, you know, remember they told us to throw in a bunch of adjectives and really add a ton of color to our writing and so on and so forth. He's writing with a lot of color.

And I want to suggest that what he's doing is, is he's sort of giving us biblical coordinates. He's rooting us back into a bunch of Old Testament imagery.

He is locating us. He's giving us theological coordinates. This is how the Bible, people don't understand how the New Testament uses the Old Testament. It's very often, it actually gives you sort of almost like coordinates.

And it puts you inside of a story. And if you're familiar with the Old Testament story, you, you hear these words. You're like, oh, I know what he's talking about. But because we don't know the Old Testament very well, I, you know, I'll spend a lot of time today pointing out where Peter is leading us.

He's leading us to the Old Testament. There's a great commentary that goes into all the Old Testament uses in the New Testament. And when it gets to first Peter, it says we cannot list all of the references.

[7:01] They're too extensive for the space that we have. Essentially, they would argue that every single verse in first Peter has some allusion or callback or direct reference to something happening in the Old Testament.

So this is going to be one of our most Old Testament centered books. Revelation is probably the most Old Testament centered book, but which is almost basically Isaiah, second Isaiah part two. But this book, first Peter is deep in the Old Testament. And the main coordinate, the main story he's trying to get us into, I think, is the Exodus story.

That seems to be the main idea. Beginning in verse two, this phrase sprinkled with blood. That is a moment in Old Testament history when Moses gathered the people to the mountain before he ascended the mountain.

He sprinkled them with blood and said, now you are obligated. This is Exodus 24. You are obligated now to obey the covenant. For I am holy. Be holy. For I am holy is a direct reference. That's in verse

15 of first Peter.

[8:06] That's a direct reference to Leviticus still in the Exodus. Ransomed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish. It's a direct reference to the Passover.

So Peter is encouraging these people to endure suffering well, and he's locating them in the story of the Exodus and specifically in the wilderness. Now, this sermon will be somewhat, sometimes nerdy, but sometimes very simple.

So just bear with me. This is a simple moment. What is the Exodus? The Exodus is when you're in between being delivered and arriving in the place you're supposed to finally be.

That's the Exodus pattern. It's all over the Bible. The main Exodus story is sort of used throughout the scriptures to reference just this constant pattern of in-betweenness.

Or the kids, every five or six years or so, a big word becomes popular. And the word right now is liminence or liminality. And it's this in-betweenness.

[9:10] It's all over social media. When Zoomers discover a new word, they have to blog about it or, you know, meme about it and so forth. But liminence or liminality, it's this idea of being in between two things.

And that's what the Exodus is. They are ransomed out of sin, and they are promised to enter into the promised land. But this period in the wilderness is the in-between.

And Peter is bringing that concept to these folks through the language of elect exiles or sojourners or so on and so forth, because that's what it feels like for them.

They were of the world, and they were part of the world. And all their social structures and their relationships, even their family structures, even their marriages were rooted in an old way of living. And now they've been redeemed, but they're not in heaven yet. They live in this in-between. I believe that this feeling of in-betweenness is the quintessential feeling of what it's like to be a Christian.

[10:16] To be a truly born again Christian is to live in a constant state of already, not yet. And it shows up everywhere. Paul describes this in Galatians 5.

It's like the spirit and the flesh do battle against one another to keep you from doing what you want. So one of the worst parts of being a Christian is to have to contend with your flesh the whole time you're trying to live a holy life unto Jesus.

That's a whole in-between experience. That alone makes you groan for the day of redemption when your sin will be no more, and you will simply be what you really deeply long to be because Christ has made you new.

You want to be that way all the way through. A real Christian struggles with this in-betweenness in their understanding of their own holiness, and then of course it spreads out in all sorts of other areas too.

Their relationships. How do you navigate the issue of money? How do you navigate the issue of sickness? And so on and so forth. All of the stuff we're called to do in this life, it's just a little awkward feeling.

[11:29] Because we're in-between. We have new desires. We have an old flesh. We have new relationships with saints who are also still sinners.

We will never in this life find one spot that's fully arrived. Our whole life is basically, we're basically all teenagers.

You know? Which isn't the most fun time to live. You know, we're all basically 12-year-olds with our voices cracking. There was a moment I was with a group of men and a couple of teenage boys, or young teenage boys, and one of the teenage boys prayed, and when he prayed, his voice just record-scratched.

You know, hard right. Just total voice break. And I looked up at all the other men were looking up at me laughing, because we were all just like, I remember that season.

You're just this in-betweenness. And friends, I don't think we put enough of a fine point on that in-betweenness is very uncomfortable, and it creates some particular temptations.

[12:38] And the temptation that it creates is what I'll just call reversion. Reversion. How does reversion play? You guys know the Exodus story. How does reversion, the impulse for reversion, play in the Exodus

story?

They want to go back to Egypt. When Angela and I were younger, it was just such a novel thing to have this person that I could, like, wrestle with and play with who was so small.

And it was just this whole novel concept. So I used to love to wrestle with it. I've stopped, because it really annoys her. And I've been sanctified somewhat over the years. But man, it used to be so much fun just to, like, mess with this little thing, and she would hate it.

Anyway, the main way I messed with her was I would dip her. You know, I would act super affectionate. I would trick her. I would, you know, because I'm a good husband. I would act super affectionate, and then I would dip her and just let her hang, like, right here.

And she just has this, like, allergy to being in that in-between, and she would, she'd just hate it. She'd just get mad and so forth, and I'd just hold her, like, right there, hovering between standing up and falling down.

[13:50] And finally, every time, just every time, she would get so sick of the in-between that she would just pull herself out of my arms and just drop to the ground. She would rather be on the ground than hovering in the in-between.

And really, that's one of the main lessons of the Exodus story. We desire certainty so much that we will revert to a lesser state, a worse state, just to feel secured.

And I would say that that instinct toward reversion is the pastoral emergency of the New Testament. It just shows up in different ways in different places.

In Hebrews, they're thinking about reverting where? Back to the law. In Galatians, they're thinking about reverting to the law.

They're trying to throw themselves down on the floor. They're not arguing that the law is superior. It's just more certain. Now, what are the Ephesians in danger of doing?

[14:57] Well, we saw this in Ephesians 4, 17. Paul says you can't live like the Gentiles anymore. So where's their reversion instinct going? Back to the passions of the flesh.

Because the passions of the flesh are really elemental and simple. And it's the reason why we grabbed that sleeve of Oreos, to be frank. To be frank, like, we know what it's like to want to find the comfort of the passions of the flesh.

We all know. And I chose a benign example, but a true one nonetheless. We are all tempted to revert.

And what you see in this passage is that their temptation to revert is very similar to the Ephesians. Look at chapter 1 of 1 Peter, verse 13. 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.

So of our four R's, return is the one that's being brought up here. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. That's almost exactly what Paul writes in Ephesians 4, 17.

[16:11] So the temptation in this moment, and it shows up again in chapter 4, the temptation of this particular moment for them is to just revert back to the manner of living that was more elemental and certain and socially acceptable.

Later on, he says that you've stopped doing this stuff and they're making fun of you for it. And he says, we'll get to this passage eventually, but he says, you know, Jesus is going to return.

Let your life be honorable so that when he returns, he finds you honorable and they have to glorify God upon his reappearing. So we have this problem of reversion.

It's the kind of, I would say you could make it this way, like I'm suffering in this in-betweenness and if anybody really cares about me and is smart and a good shepherd, they'll know that the most likely instinct in the in-betweenness is to revert back to a more knowable state even though it's worse.

And so if you're a good shepherd, you're like, that person's suffering, where are they going to default into behaviors that produce a sense of certainty even if those behaviors are sin?

[17:25] And so Peter's dealing with that here. As obedient children, don't be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your context. So he

throws out Leviticus there, Exodus language, since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy.

And if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.

He's referencing this in-betweenness that they're feeling, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers. Again, the temptation would be to just go back to the way that dad did things.

Right? So what he's doing here is he is heading off, which is what I would argue is the basic pastoral emergency of the New Testament, the instinct to respond to the in-betweenness with reversion to control.

And I think if you actually started picking apart your sins of the flesh in particular, you would find the love of control and the love of certainty to be extremely central to the way you're behaving.

[18:42] It's just the way humans are. It's just the way we act. Okay. Now, he's not just bringing up the Exodus pattern to say, yeah, you're in-between, and you need to be patient because you're going to enter into the promised land eventually when Jesus returns.

It's even more complex than that. He's got a story within the Exodus story that he's referencing specifically. And let me tell you that story. It starts in Exodus 24.

We're in the point of Exodus where Moses is making his way up and down the mountain. He's meeting with God. He's returning. He's already returned with the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 24, God says, bring all the people to the mountain.

Don't let them touch the mountain. And sprinkle them all with blood and tell them, today you have entered a covenant with me to obey me. So this is where Peter's locating our story.

Sprinkle with blood. All the people stood at the edge of the mountain and Moses sprinkles them all with blood and says, you're all bound by this blood of this covenant to obey me.

[19:47] So then Moses does what? He goes up onto the mountain. He disappears. And he's up on the mountain doing what?

Well, two things. One, he has the Ten Commandments already, but he's going to receive them written with the finger of God. He's going to receive them written on tablets.

But if you just read through Exodus 24, 25, 26, and so forth, what he's really doing most of the time while he's up on the mountain with God is he's receiving instructions for the tabernacle. What's the tabernacle?

It's the first installment of the dwelling place between God and man. So that's the story that Peter's rooting us in. And here's the basic idea. You've been sprinkled with the blood of the law, the blood of obligation, the blood of bulls and goats.

Moses. I'm going to disappear. I'm your mediator. Moses is the mediator between God and man. Moses is going to disappear into the heavens and receive the blueprints for the first installment of the dwelling place between God and man.

[20:58] What happens when he returns? What does he find when he returns? That's the golden calf passage. He finds reversion. They didn't relocate physically to Egypt, but they relocated their hearts.

They were worshipping the gods of Egypt. So Moses, the mediator between God and man, goes up into the heavens unto the mountain of the Lord to receive the blueprint for the dwelling place of God and man, and he returns and finds faithlessness.

That's the story Peter is locating us in when he's teaching us about how to endure uncertainty because the final pattern in Christ has emerged.

Peter says that the prophets long ago inquired as to what was going on. The spirit of Christ was testifying. How would this all take place? And Peter's like, it's now. We're at the final installment. And so now we have a situation.

We'll go back through the first book, the first chapter, and we'll see this. Now we have a situation where Jesus has sprinkled us with his blood. That's what verse 2 says.

[22:09] For obedience, it says. So he's put us into a new covenant and it's with his blood, not the blood of bulls and goats. What does he do after that? He disappears.

He goes up to the right hand of the Father. And what does he do there? I go to prepare a place for you.

What does he do when he returns? We read that this morning in the call of worship. Behold, I'm making all things new. He's bringing the new heavens and the new earth as it were on his back on his return.

He brings the final tabernacle into the earth, the place where God and man will dwell together forever. And the question is, and Jesus asked this question himself in Luke 18, 8, when the Son of Man returns, will he find faith?

Or when he returns, will he find what Moses found? Which is a bunch of licentious reversion because we lost sight of Jesus.

[23:09] We couldn't see him anymore. You see, that's the drama of this chapter. The question is, is that Jesus is going to return like Moses returned.

Will Jesus find faith? Luke 18, 8. Or will he find faithlessness? Like Moses did. And that's really what you have to ask yourself as individuals.

That's the only, I'll explain to you in a minute, that's the only way this question even makes sense to ask. And that is simply this. Are you individually going to endure to the end in spite of all the in-betweenness, in spite of the fact that you can't see Christ, in spite of the fact that you don't understand what's happening to you, in spite of all of this, when he returns, will he find you faithful to him or faithless worshiping the things of this world?

That's the only question that matters fundamentally. When Jesus comes back off the mountain, in what state will you be?

And the only way to answer that question is to think about, do I have a living hope? Am I seeing evidence of endurance? Do I handle the liminality of Christian living in a faithful, patient way?

[24:39] Am I able to see in my life long obedience in the same direction? Or, am I more like the poor, wicked folks in Exodus who simply could not, even if they wanted to, endure?

Because the blood that sprinkled on them was not the blood of Jesus. It was the blood of the law. It was the blood of obligation. It was the blood of requirements.

You need to be able to answer that question. You personally need to be able to say, purely because of Christ's goodness, I have evidence of being a person who can endure liminality without jumping back into the candy bowl of the flesh.

You know, the wantonness, the doubt, the anxiety, the control freakiness, all this stuff. Do you show evidence in your life of being an endurer?

As I've read this morning, the call to worship, those are the ones who go with Jesus, those who conquer. Now, the reason why I say that's such an essentially individualistic question, because the reality is is that you can't ask that question corporately.

[26:00] Do you know why? Because there is such a thing as the invisible church. There are true saints in the world, and those true saints are filled with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and they are united with Christ, and they have their life-fueling faith from Christ, and they have been received all of Christ's righteousness, and no credit to themselves, but they just have endurance because they have the faithfulness of Jesus applied to their hearts, and so corporately, here's the reality, like here's the basic truth of this passage.

When Jesus returns, he will find his church doing quite well, thank you, because they have been filled with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the life-giving, living hope, real faith of Jesus Christ.

The question isn't, will there be people who are faithful? There will be people who are faithful through no credits of their own. The question is, are you one of them? Do you have a living hope? Do you have evidence that you can observe that it's as if you are wearing the life preserver of Christ's covenant faithfulness, and so that even when you fall, you come back again and again and again?

And so Peter's trying to thread a needle here because corporately, it's their question, the church will obey. The sheep hear his voice. But he's got people who are suffering in this in-betweenness, and it's probable that not all of them are really saved.

[27:35] And so he's walking this line that is a really hard line to walk pastorally between assurance and warning. but the reality is is that there are people in this room who have been born again and they have a hope that is living because they have Christ.

They have a guarded by God's power because they have Christ. They have faith that is genuine because they have Christ. They've not been redeemed, verse 19, with perishable things but with the precious blood of Christ.

And so those people who have that, when Jesus returns, carrying a whole new creation on his back, full and complete, the final dwelling place, at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore, when Jesus returns carrying the new heavens and the new earth on his back, ready to install the final update into the creation story, he will find faith on earth.

Will you be amongst the faithful? That is an essential question that you must ask in this kind of context.

it's the question that you could say the story of Exodus was designed to make you ask because we see how few endured all the way to the end.

[28:53] Now, the next question is, okay, Chris, I'm a little concerned. I don't want Jesus returning with the new creation on his back and finding me worshiping my little version of a golden calf.

It's like, what do I do about that? You have to understand that as a human being, you have no hope of being faithful to God unless Jesus Christ has imputed his righteousness to your soul.

And you will just keep cycling through the works of the flesh over and over and over again until Jesus has made you new. And so in some ways, the most important thing that's happening in this first chapter is verse three.

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.

That's the kind of hope that endures. A living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So I'd like to just take a moment and pray before we go into communion.

[29:58] And I want to pray that God makes every single person in this room a person who has living hope. And that's going to require a bit of humility for some of you who may not want to acknowledge that you don't necessarily have great evidence of endurance.

But this isn't a traditional altar call. This isn't a manipulation of anything. This is just appealing to the great mercy of God who causes people to be born again. So let's just take a moment and pray. the world is going to bring plenty of suffering, Lord.

It's inevitable. There will be plenty of reasons for us to be like the seed who is choked out by the cares of the world. or the other seeds that are not enduring seeds.

There's plenty of cause for us to fall away. In fact, that's a normal order of things. If you did not interpose your precious blood for our souls, we would all be like seeds cast on stony ground.

[31:22] And so, Father, we first and foremost want to clear out any foolishness that suggests that our salvation has come to us because we have been reasonable, smart, or humble.

Nonsense. Nonsense. Nonsense. We are saved by grace, that of faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. So we're not in a measuring moment here.

We're in a moment where we acknowledge that it is only by your great mercy that you caused us to be born again. A work that John says is not by the will of man, but by the will of God.

But we would say, Lord, that unless you place your living life inside of us, we cannot endure. And we will keep self-sabotaging, bailing out of endurance.

Lord, the people in Exodus, they couldn't last 40 days without seeing their mediator. Most of us are going to spend our entire lifetime not seeing our mediator.

[32:40] And though we have not seen him, we love him. And though we do not now see him, we believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

So, Lord, what a difference the mediator makes. Under the law, the flesh can't hold out 40 days with invisibility being present, uncertainty.

