

1Peter 11-06-10a

This is Friday, the 10th of June, 2011. We're in the letter of 1 Peter in chapter 4, and resume at verse 15 tonight. We'll take a moment at the beginning here to focus our concentration, get everybody seated and ready to concentrate on this part of God's Word.

There's some really interesting things in here. We're going to find out exactly what a busy body is tonight and why it's lumped in with murderers and thieves. So let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, it is a wonderful thing to see your hand of grace and provision, blessing and encouragement through all of the ups and downs of our lives. We thank you for bringing us through another week. We thank you for the difficulties that we face.

We know that some of us are currently experiencing illness and others are under pressure and stress of various kinds. And we know that this is all a part of your plan and purpose. It is designed for our benefit.

It is an opportunity to reflect your glory and to reveal parts of your plan, purpose, and your personal character to us that we could not see in any other way. We pray that as we study your Word this evening that the Holy Spirit will illuminate it for us and through it illuminate our lives and the circumstances that we experience so that we will learn those things you would have us to know and to appreciate during the time that remains to us in this life so that we will be prepared for the eternal future and all that it holds. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, you'll remember that Peter is writing to people that are in a far-off situation. They're not in their homeland.

And they are immersed in a culture that is antagonistic to their culture, their own culture and their values in many cases. And there is a pull, especially on their young people, to be drawn into the Hellenistic Roman milieu there instead of the traditional Jewish, religiously founded and rooted mode of operation. And this is a trial for them.

They are also experiencing some persecution, some prejudice, some hatred, some maltreatment at the hands of people around them. And it always invites comparison. We think about ourselves today, and depending on where you live, what country, what social stratum, what set of circumstantial cards you've been dealt, or even at different periods in our lives.

Sometimes we are greatly at ease. We're floating along on a barge that seems to be taking us right to our destination. And other times it's a rough, uphill, mountainous, arduous climb to get where we need to go.

Sometimes we feel like everything is in harmony. Other times we feel like there's great opposition

and oppression. Sometimes we feel like people are on our side.

Other times we feel like they're out to get us. And it is sometimes difficult, especially if we look to the right, and we look to the left, and we say, nobody knows the trouble I've seen. We want to sing the old song.

You just don't understand. You don't get it, because you're not walking in my moccasins full of rocks. And you're wearing a nice new pair of those orthopedically cushioned shoes.

What are those rocker-bottom shoes called that everybody's wearing? No, there's a name for those. They've got a rocker-bottom on them. And you look like... Shape-ups.

Yeah, shape-ups. That looks like a really comfortable shoe to me. It looked like you just would barely lift your leg and your feet would just do their own walking.

But we look around and we think, well, why am I suffering all this hardship? Why did I get the particular set of challenges that I have? And how come these people over here aren't suffering near as much as I am? Have I done something wrong? Is God picking on me? Have I brought this on myself? Am I just a convenient target for people who have ill will? Why is it that I'm chewing ground glass here while everybody else is having pudding? So we are tempted to be subjective. What is the definition of subjectivity? At least our working definition. Eyes on people.

Eyes on circumstances. Eyes on self. What is objectivity? Objectivity is what the Word of God gives us.

We see ourselves in the context of God's greater plan and purpose. I've always, ever since I was a teenager, been impressed with the idea because I had read accounts from the Vietnam War of guys that were in combat. And it's very confusing.

I remember once reading of a squad leader. And I think this was just a sergeant. I think his lieutenant had been killed.

And I think this was just enlisted men. And there was only eight or nine of them left led by the senior enlisted man, who was all that was left out of this. It was either a platoon or a squad.

I kind of forgot the details now. But what I do remember is these guys were walking down a sort of a dirt road in Vietnam. And it was something of a raised road.

And it sloped off on each side into the impenetrable jungle. And I mean jungle that you have to hack your way through. And so they were going along.

They were watching for mines, watching for tripwires and stuff like that. All of a sudden, the PRC-77 crackled to life. And they got a message from higher headquarters.

And it said, Get off the road. Get your men off the road right now. Well, to get to where they

needed to go and not be on the road, they couldn't get there.

And so the sergeant got back on the radio. And he gave his call sign. And he said, Look, we're never going to make it slogging through the jungle.

And we don't know. There can be all kinds of booby traps and stuff off the side of this thing. We want to stick to the road where we can see what's ahead of us.

And this kind of hasty thing came back. It sounded like there was a lot going on at the headquarters. It said, Get off the road and get off the road now.

Well, they really didn't want to get off the road. They couldn't see any sense in it. Because to them, the jungle was quiet.

They had no reports of any enemy nearby. Unbeknownst to them, there was a huge offensive taking place. And there was great swarms of enemy coming in their direction.

They couldn't hear them. They couldn't see them. The jungle is like a blanket.

And if you've ever been in anything like that, you know this. And Friendly was going to send in airstrikes, massive airstrikes, defoliation, the whole works, napalm. They were going to hit it with everything they had and try to put a big ring of fire here.

Well, these guys were right in the way. And headquarters didn't have time to explain to them why they needed to get off the road. And from their limited viewpoint, it just made no sense.

It's already hard and difficult. We're already risking our lives looking for snipers. You're asking us to go off into the unknown jungle here.

Why should we do that? But they had to have faith that the people on the other end of the radio knew what they were talking about. And they did get off the road, and they were really thankful they did because literally all Gehenna broke loose around their ears there. And because they were in defilade on the side of that road, that bank protected them from this massive onslaught on the other side.

And the only reason they lived and weren't killed by Friendly Fire is that they did what they were told. And it just has always stuck in my mind that when we see the instructions from God, it doesn't always make sense in our circumstance. We think, well, this is just very counterintuitive.

This is just going to take a bad situation and make it worse. But we have to trust that God knows what he's talking about. We have to trust that he's got more information and can see all of the situation, and it is best.

Sometimes you are sent in to die in place, and it's still best. Generals have to make these kinds

of decisions all the time. Senior military have to say, look, we've got to put the only troops we have out there.

There's not enough of them, but we've got to delay this advance until we can bring up reinforcements. We've got to do whatever we can to slow the enemy down. We're going to put these guys out there, and we're going to lose them.

They are not going to be able to stop this advance, but they can slow it down. And if they slow it down enough, we will be able to react and plug this hole before we lose a major theater-wide conflict. And occasionally we are called to die in place.

You look at the history of the Christian martyrs. You look at some of the people in the first century, and you think, well, now, how did that work together for good if they were arrested and imprisoned and thrown to the lions or impaled on stakes or lit for Nero to have a garden party and have little human torches on each side of the road for his guests? How did that glorify Christ? We are still not in a position to see everything that God is doing, and we won't be until we're in the eternal future. And by the way, some of us in the eternal future will still not be able to be in a position to see it because we didn't learn and grow here.

One of the privileges of the overcomers, of those of us who persist and pursue and do our best to learn, is to him who has, more will be given. To him that has not, even what he has will be taken away. That's a biblical principle.

And one of the incentives, one of the motivations to learn, even when we're in a passage and you say, well, you know, this doesn't really seem pertinent, doesn't seem relevant, doesn't apply to me. Why am I in the 50-something chapter of Isaiah or the 4-something chapter of 1 Peter? I don't see this pertaining to me. It is frame of reference.

It is background. We are sometimes astonished at how it suddenly becomes pertinent and relevant and applicable in the very near future. And if nothing else, it is part of the fabric that is going to serve us when we get to the eternal future.

And God says, now, let me take you up above. Let me take you up to a little bit higher altitude. Let me take you up to Pisgah.

Let me take you to the top of Moriah and show you the landscape from here. The devil was able to take the Lord Jesus up to a mountaintop and he could see all the kingdoms of the world. That's the kind of mountain I would love to be on.

Wouldn't you love to really perceive the worldwide plan of God in all of its beauty and complexity and reflection of His glory? Some of us will get that opportunity, but it depends on how bad you want it. People who aren't interested now won't be interested then. Those of us who are interested now are going to be interested then, and that's part of the reward.

So, when we come to this section of 1 Peter in chapter 4, and he's writing to these people who are in this circumstance, and it would be easy to feel sorry for themselves. Of all of the Jews that live in Judea, why was it me and my family that got hounded out? And they could make rationalizations. There were a lot worse people.

There were people who were far more evil and far more apathetic and indifferent to the things of God, and they're still there. They're still in their property. They still have their situation.

I, who have been trying to serve God, have been suddenly thrust out here in the middle of nowhere. Why is that? We can see from our vantage point that those were the people God could entrust with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were the point of the spear.

They were some of the first ones to take the gospel to the Gentiles and live it out in front of the Gentiles. Why did God leave those other apathetic and indifferent Jews at ease in Judea? Because they were useless to Him, and they have no reward at the judgment. They have no inheritance.

And these that lost houses and lands and fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, Jesus said, for my sake, we'll have it back a hundredfold in the kingdom because they had faith, because they stuck with the plan. They trusted what God told them. And it turns out, in retrospect, to be a momentary light affliction that is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

So that's who Peter is writing to, and it's such a valuable letter to see his methods of encouragement, the information that he gives these people, the perspective and the view that he gives them so that they can understand better their place in God's plan and how important and central they are. So I would offer you this thought as a first point of application. If we do find ourselves under stress, under pressure, facing opposition, feeling resistance, having a hard time working through the circumstances, getting things done because of whatever kind of opposition it is.

Sometimes it's people. Sometimes it's circumstantial. Sometimes it's physical.

But whatever it is, you think about many believers that aren't facing that, and maybe they're not as interested in the things of God. Well, guess what? Just like Peter tells this group in the first part of the first chapter, you are chosen pilgrims. God chose you to do this harder thing because he knows you can do it.

You're what he's looking for to face these challenges and in overcoming them be sharper and more tempered and more ready for future service. And who in their right mind wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want to be a more fit and useful servant to the Master, to God in Heaven, to the Lord Jesus Christ? And if it takes some stressful preparation, who wouldn't want to do that for the joy that is beyond it, for the opportunities and the privileges and the knowledge that you have the chance to walk up to the judgment seat and have the Lord Jesus Christ Himself say, Well done,

thou good and faithful servant. How valuable are those words compared to, Well, I sure had a comfortable week.

Well, that air conditioning sure felt good this week. Instead of being willing to go out and work in the field, come in and prepare the Master's dinner and say, I have done no more than what is expected of me. I'm just a servant.

But this is what Peter is getting across and that's what he has talked about in these chapters. So when he comes down here to this section, verses 12 through 17, he says, Beloved, don't think it is strange, Xenos, concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you. You can't make a good sword.

You can't make a good spear. You can't make a good horseshoe if you don't heat and temper the metal. It's going to be too soft.

It won't hold its shape. It won't hold its edge. It won't survive blows in combat if it isn't heated and quenched.

Heated and quenched. By the way, have you ever seen any documentary or read about how the Japanese used to make the samurai swords? That is an interesting, interesting process because you would think, well, I'm going to get a bar of iron or steel and I'm going to hammer it flat. I'm going to kind of sharpen it.

I'll heat it up and temper it and I'm going to make a sword. Well, that's how the Europeans did it. And when you're just fighting other Europeans, well, that's fine.

He's got a cold bar of iron made into a sword and so do you. But the Japanese for the samurai swords would take the metal and flatten it way out and then they would fold it over and they would fold it over again and they would hammer it flat and then they would fold it over and they would fold it over again and they would hammer it flat. And what happened was in the folding, and you think about the extra stress that this metal is going through because it's getting hammered flat and folded.

Hammered flat and folded. Hammered flat and folded. And they can talk about the quality of a samurai blade based on who made it because they know these different samurai sword makers and how many folds they would put into these.

But what it did is it created a blade that held an edge amazingly well. I saw a guy trying any other kind of sharp edge and he was cutting rolled up bamboo mats. And he took a European sword sharpened to a razor edge, you know, Wilkinson sword, whacked away and it stuck but it only cut about a third of the way in.

He took all kinds of other things and he was trying to cut. When you roll up these bamboo mats, I mean, they are just, that's tough to get through. But then he took one of these samurai swords and he just went, and I mean, it sliced it right off.

And then he went, he was just swirling the sword and the little tops of this bamboo mat were just coming off like carrot slices, just, and he said, it's because of the way they made these blades. It takes a lot more time and an incredible amount of experience and knowledge of how the metal works, but it's all in this folding and tempering and folding and tempering and folding and tempering. That's what God does with us.

That's why we're left here after salvation. So Peter says, don't think it's strange. Don't think it's some kind of weird deal that you're undergoing a fiery trial.

This is God's purpose for us. He isn't punishing us. He's not pulling the wings off the flies up there.

Well, let me just see how many different ways I can make people suffer. Don't think that some strange thing is happening to you. Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings.

What do we know about Christ's sufferings? The Bible tells us that he learned obedience through the things that he suffered. It's an incredible statement, and it's a reminder of the fact that the Lord Jesus was true humanity. He wasn't an invincible, immovable, unttemptable God moving effortlessly through human circumstances.

He learned obedience because he suffered. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered his whole life here on earth. Can you imagine being perfect and having everybody else... It's hard enough being a perfectionist and you're disappointed by your own mistakes as well as everybody else's.

But the only ones you want to talk about are everybody else's. You kind of shut up on your own or beat yourself up in private. But imagine truly being perfect and having everybody around you be imperfect.

Your parents are imperfect. Your brothers and sisters are imperfect. Your disciples are imperfect.

Everybody you talk to is imperfect. And the Lord Jesus suffered in that regard. He suffered because he had such a heart for his people.

He was so anxious to deliver them. He wanted desperately to give them the kingdom that his Father had promised them. Going back to the garden, going back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it was his mission to bring them the kingdom.

And he stood over Jerusalem and cried. The Lord Jesus Christ, tears running down his face, looking at that panorama of Jerusalem, I would so much have wanted to take you under my wings like a hand does her chicks, and you would have none of me. You talk about rejection.

You talk about reviling. You talk about people spitting and biting the hand that feeds them and lashing out when God is doing nothing but trying to bless them. And it grieved him.

He suffered in that, but he learned obedience in and through the things that he suffered. And that's, we're walking in his footsteps. He's our example.

Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings. We can't partake of the cross. We can't partake of redemption, reconciliation, and atonement and all of the things that Christ did on the cross.

These are his sufferings in the world. These are his sufferings at the hands of people. And what did he do wrong to deserve that suffering? What did Jesus do wrong? Nothing.

Every particle, every ounce of Jesus' suffering was undeserved. Every bit of it. Nothing is as rankling, nothing is as frustrating, nothing is as aggravating as undeserved suffering.

This is not fair. I didn't do anything to bring this on myself. Why is this happening to me? Jesus lived with that every day of his life.

And he knows it better than we do. He has explored depths of it that we could never comprehend. But we can partake of that same thing.

And to the extent that we do, we also share in his glory, in his triumph, in his vindication in the ages to come. When his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. And this is just, even with all of these superlatives, it's understatement.

To rejoice with exceeding joy it just doesn't even begin to touch it. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you. Makarioi.

It's just one word. You're a blessed one. Because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

On their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is glorified. I told you before, I think this is probably a gloss that got incorporated into the text. It's nothing erroneous in it, but I don't think Peter wrote it.

I think it was a note that got kind of... and there's reasons for that I won't go into. But look at verse 15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

Now, let me ask you this. If you are a murderer or a thief or a criminal, what happens? If there's any justice in the world at all, what happens? Police come and arrest you and put you in jail, right? You go up before the judge and you are tried. Murder, robbery, theft, embezzlement, any of those, and evil doing, this is all other forms of criminal behavior, right? And then with these three, you have busybody.

And I think, murderer, busybody. You know, Son of Sam, gossip columnist. I mean, how is this on the same level? Well, it's real interesting because the words for these, thief is kleptes,

kleptomaniac.

That's easy. Murderer is phonuo. We don't really have a cognate that comes over into English on this.

Our word for murder and so on tends to come from Latin and other places. But this is P-H-O-N-E-U-O or O-S. Phoneus is what we have here, P-H-O-N-E-U-S.

And there's no other shades on this. It's a murderer. It's somebody that goes premeditatedly, cold-bloodedly, and with malice aforethought, takes a life, sheds human blood.

Murderer, thief, evildoer is kakopoyos. And it's almost onomopoetic. Poyo is to make or to do.

Kakos is evil. So he's an evil maker, an evildoer. And this is pretty much every other form of criminal activity.

Or as a, and you have it translated, busybody, this is alotrio episkopos. Alotrio episkopos. Now, just take the last part of that.

You recognize it, don't you? Episkopos. This is translated bishop a lot of places in the King James or overseer in the New American Standard, New King James. Episkopos.

Epi upon, scope, to look. To look upon, to look over. To look to, to oversee, which hence overseer.

So episkopos, that's good. Alotrios, which is jammed onto the beginning of that, means other. You have two different words in Greek that talk about something else.

There's another of the same kind and there's another of a different kind. And this is alos or alotrios. And this is another of a different kind.

So the, and by the way, it's a hypoxogamina and they can't find hardly any example even to go by in other Greek literature. It just seems to be a coined word. So they're thinking, well, what does it mean? Well, if you're looking over others, you kind of get the busybody idea.

I'm looking over at what you're doing. I'm meddling. I'm getting into your stuff.

I'm minding your business instead of my own. But when I look at this, I think murderer, thief, criminal, or, you know, grandma, busybody and around. I mean, it just seems really incongruous.

And so I did some work on this to try to figure out what it might be. And I have a notion, but you're going to have to wait till after the break to hear it because it's flashing at me with a one here. So this way we'll leave a little cliffhanger there to make sure you come back for the second.

But here's, let me just close with this. If you think about this first session and the review that we

have done of first Peter in general in this part of chapter four in particular, we psych ourselves out. It's, you know, there's many different illustrations.

Do we look at the glass as half full or half empty? But we cannot allow bad circumstances, testing, trials, adversity, opposition to get us down and make us think something's wrong. And then we start trying to look for a solution. We say, well, there's something wrong.

I've got to, I've got to solve this. I've got to find a way out. I've got to, it reminds me of when a lot of us were in college and things were difficult in any college, they can be very difficult.

And some people say I'm dropping out. This is too hard. Well, they don't make things hard in college for you to drop out.

They make them hard so that when you emerge, you have that much better in education. You've not only learned some academic material, but you've learned life lessons in how to manage your time, how to meet your obligations, how to get things done on time, how to work together with others when you have group projects. How to budget your efforts.

You learn a lot of life lessons during that time. And it's made hard, not just because they're trying to get you to learn a bunch of information, but you learn a lot of other things as well. God's doing the very same thing with us.

And Peter says, you've got to turn this thing around. When you see adversity, you want to say, all right, I eat this kind of eight penny nails for breakfast. This is God's way of preparing me for service.

He's obviously interested in me. He's got a plan for me. He's got something laid out for me.

And this is my training. This is my bootcamp. This is my being forged in the fire with a nice sharp point and a hard edge that I'm going to be able to hold and God will be able to use me.

It isn't going to make us happy. We're not going to be giddy and hysterically giggly over suffering and trial and adversity. But it reminds us that we need to maintain that sense of purpose.

We need to persevere. We need to endure. We need to hold a steady course.

However hard the wind blows, however high the waves may get, however much green water we take over the bow, we hold our course. It may not be fun. It may be soggy and wet and miserable.

It may be painful, but we're holding our course because we know. I know whom I have believed. I'm persuaded He is able to keep what I have committed to Him against that day.

And we don't waver. We don't flinch. We don't fade.

We don't wilt. We don't wither. We don't give up.

We don't quit. Why? Because we trust that God knows what He's doing. He can see what we cannot see.

His plan is perfect. His provision is perfect. He doesn't allow anything to touch us except what is beneficial to us, even though it doesn't seem so at the time.

It is all about faith in God. Do you believe Him or not? Do you believe in His love? Do you believe in His plan? Do you believe in His omniscience? Do you believe in the perfection of His provision for us? Then we stick. We stand fast.

Like Job, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Those are the people that are going to be rewarded and blessed and used by God. I am not nearly so interested personally in reward or blessing or a trophy or something.

What I think would be so great is to get to the eternal future and be useful to God, to get to participate in unimaginably new and great things that He's going to be doing in the eternal future. And when He's looking for somebody to do it, you think about the angels making the animals and the plants on planet Earth. I don't think all of the angels got to do that.

I think God selected angels. How did He pick them? Well, what had they done in angelic prehistory? Well, I want to be one of those that gets picked. Nobody wants to be standing there when they're choosing up sides and you're last.

Because you can't hit a basket because you didn't practice. And you can't dribble because you didn't practice. And you don't know how to set a pick and you don't know how to play basketball because you didn't practice and you didn't take an interest.

And now on the day when they're picking teams, you're all anxious to be picked, but you don't know how to play. Why would anybody pick you? Well, we want to be picked. We want to be ready.

We want to be skilled. We want to be useful to the Master in the things He's going to do in the future. And this is our training.

So even though it's not going to be necessarily a smiling, happy day, it does harden our resolve and encourage us and motivate us to keep walking that steady line. Let's pause here and take a break. When we come back, we'll figure out what a busy body really is.