

Reflections on Regeneration

Chapter 8 New Testament Audio Lesson #80



Objective: To understand both why God allows suffering and how the new birth occurs



Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

—1 Peter 1:22-23

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.

—1 Peter 2:9-10

Today's "prosperity theology" falsely preaches that if you are in God's will, you will be healthy, wealthy, and immune to suffering. But that does not line up with the suffering and persecution that we find in the epistles of Peter and the rest of the entire New Testament. Peter's message to the suffering Jewish Christians is to be encouraged—and to keep following the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter gives two reasons why God permits His people to suffer. God allows suffering to grow our faith. For example, Job's suffering came from Satan, but God allowed it. Jesus promised that no problem comes to us without going through Him first. Another reason God allows suffering is that it purifies our faith, which is more precious than gold.

Peter describes the process of new birth or conversion. Life is conceived when the seed and the egg meet. When we respond to the Word of God, the imperishable Seed, we are born again. Spiritual life is conceived in us. Our souls are purified. After spiritual conception, we have a gestation period, which brings us to full term and new birth. As newborns desire milk, we desire the living Word of God. The result of being born again is the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter writes about the kingdom of God. For the Israelites, God's kingdom was both national and geographical. But, in the New Testament, Jesus' first message was "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*" (Matthew 4:17) The kingdom of God is now within us, those who believe. The kingdom is wherever people believe and follow Jesus Christ.

All believers in Christ make up a royal priesthood. In the Old Testament, the priest would go into the presence of God on behalf of the people. Now, we are all priests who are called to make disciples and to intercede on their behalf. This is known as the priesthood of the believer.



1. True or False: The main reason for Peter's epistles was to comfort those who were suffering.
2. True or False: The "prosperity theology" of today fits well with the suffering that God's people have undergone in both the past and the present.
3. True or False: The prophets did not understand everything they foretold about salvation.
4. True or False: God wants all His people to escape persecution and suffering.

Choose all answers that apply.

5. Why would God allow His people to suffer?
 - a. He does not really love us.
 - b. He wants to grow our faith.
 - c. He cannot stop suffering.
 - d. Suffering is only for bad people.
6. What does Jesus' image of Himself as the Good Shepherd imply about the suffering of His sheep?
 - a. We can trust Him to take care of us.
 - b. He is not good after all.
 - c. The only problems that come to us are those which He has allowed through.
 - d. It does not make sense.
7. Jesus said that one person sows while another person reaps. What does this imply about the Kingdom of God?
 - a. No one works alone in the Kingdom
 - b. The one who reaps gets the credit.
 - c. Some people are more important in Kingdom work.
 - d. The Kingdom grows because of our efforts.

8. What happens when we are born again or experience the new birth?
 - a. We hear the Word, believe, and are born again.
 - b. We faithfully go to church.
 - c. We say a prayer and are baptized.
 - d. We are born into a Christian family.

9. The Kingdom of God is no longer under one flag or nation. Where is it?
 - a. It is wherever Jewish people live.
 - b. It is wherever people go to church.
 - c. It is in the hearts of believers.
 - d. It is only in heaven.

10. What is the priesthood of the believer?
 - a. Only bishops, archbishops, and cardinals can be priests.
 - b. Every believer is a priest.
 - c. No one is a priest anymore.
 - d. Jewish priests are the only ones that God recognizes.

11. Why does Peter compare suffering for our faith to the purifying of gold?
 - a. Gold is a precious metal, and our faith is precious to God.
 - b. Gold is purified through cleansing with water.
 - c. Gold and our faith become more valuable through purifying.
 - d. Gold is lovely to look at.



Jesus, the Good Shepherd, said that He is the doorway or gatekeeper for His sheep. So no sheep can go out without his knowledge, and no predator can come in without his knowledge. How does this promise relate to you and suffering?

Explain the process of spiritual conception that leads to the new birth. Have you experienced the new birth?



Thank God for making salvation possible to you. Thank Him that you are a child of God, set apart for Him and vital to the Kingdom. During times of suffering, ask Him to purify your faith and help you be faithful to Him. Thank Him for all the people who gave their lives to ensure that the Bible would survive through the centuries. Thank Him for making His Word available to you.



Going Deeper

1. Why did Peter mention suffering fourteen times in this letter? _____

2. How do you explain and apply to your own life three things that Peter writes about the suffering of the followers of Christ in verses 6 and 7 of chapter 1? _____

3. How do you apply to your own journey of faith, and teach others about, the way Peter overviews in retrospect (in 1: 22, 23-2: 2) the experience of the new birth? _____

4. What is the catalyst that brings about “spiritual conception” in Peter’s inspired metaphor in which he compares the new birth to physical birth? _____

5. How does that analogy continue into verses 1 and 2 in the second chapter? _____

6. Explain and apply to your own life and ministry the role the Word of God plays in this entire process. _____

7. Why then is it important to get people in the Word and the Word into people? (Include in your answer 2 Peter 1:19, which teaches us beautifully and metaphorically that when God’s people get into His Word and His Word gets into His people they experience the new birth.)
