

COMMUNITY GROUP GUIDE

God's silence? ③

INTRODUCTION | "the fierce flame of hardship"

Today's passage talks about hope amid trials and sufferings. Everybody wants to avoid hardships, but they happen anyway. Do not fear them excessively. You should remain in Christ to overcome those difficulties. It is surprising how hardship can become a source of deep joy. You should place your hope in the future that comes after the trials. Let your life be in the hands of our almighty Creator.

SCRIPTURE | 1 Peter 4:12-19

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

QUESTIONS |

- 1: (verses 12-14) How does the apostle Peter describe hardships? According to him, how can we deal with hardship? What is surprising to you?
- 2: Big trials or sufferings can shake your faith toward God. In Japan, Christians were persecuted during the 17th century and the Christian population does not grow readily. Some think that Christianity is not compatible with Japanese culture. How can you respond to these challenges? (reference: Shusaku Endo)
- 3: Why can you respond positively to hardships caused by your faith in Christ with joy and gladness? (reference: Hebrews 4:15-16, Romans 8:26)
- 4: (verses 15-16) According to Peter, if you face trials, you should keep on doing good, and not be ashamed, but glorify God. When Jesus endured the sufferings of the cross and faced death, he showed signs of fear and anxiety. What is the difference between the sufferings Jesus experienced and the trials Christians face? How does this difference encourage us? (reference: Matthew 26:39, 27:45-46)
- 5: (verses 17-19) Peter considers trials as an opportunity to remember about the time for the last judgment. What is the benefit for you to remember about the judgment?
- 6: After dying on the cross, Jesus resurrected, and he promised a final victory. What is the hope for people who face trials while remaining in Christ?

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REFERENCES |

Shusaku Endo, “SILENCE”, tr. by William Johnston, pp.198-9,202-3

This country is a more terrible swamp... Whenever you plant a sapling in this swamp the roots begin to rot... And we have planted the sapling of Christianity in this swamp... The Japanese are not able to think of God completely divorced from man; the Japanese cannot think of existence that transcends the human.

Hebrews 4:15-16

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Romans 8:26

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Matthew 26:39

39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Matthew 27:45-46

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

PRAYER |

- Let our faith grow to be able to taste God's grace in trials, instead of being surprised and doubting. Pray to be truly satisfied by the salvation and hope that Jesus death and resurrection bring through the Holy Spirit.
- Please share anecdotes when you experienced God's grace while facing trials. Pray for those you are facing hardships and sufferings.

UPCOMING EVENTS | This Week & Next Week

Lunchtime meeting (21 Akasaka, 22 Marunouchi, 23 Otemachi)

Retirement home visit (25)

Worship & fellowship (26) Gospel partnership “the role of humans” from 14:00 @ Nihonbashi Hamacho F Tower

Welcome dinner (26) (to apply: events@gracecitychurch.jp)

Grace City gospel (27) new choir members wanted!

Lunchtime meeting (3/1 Kasumigaseki, 2 Otemachi)

Obento project (4)

Worship & fellowship (5) Gospel partnership “a life of wisdom” from 13:00 and 15:30, @ KDDI Hall