

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

The Good Life Might Be Harder Than We Imagine

1 Peter 3:13-18

July 15th, 2018

Main Point

Last week, we considered the blessings that come from living “the good life.” Today’s text teaches us that those blessings may also include suffering for doing what is good.

Getting Started

When you consider that believers might suffer for doing the right thing, what goes through your mind? Peter tells his readers that while it’s unlikely people will persecute a believer for doing what’s good or best for others, it’s possible they will suffer for doing the right thing. He goes on in chapter 4 to tell his readers to arm themselves with the knowledge that since Christ suffered, they may also experience opposition. Suffering for one’s faith is generally a reality in the lives of believers around the world.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

2 Timothy 3:12

Observation

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read 1 Peter 3:13-14.

Who does Peter say will harm believers for doing good?

How does he describe those who suffer for righteousness’ sake?

Have you ever suffered for doing what was right? Why might we not feel “blessed” when we suffer for righteousness?

When Peter says we should not “fear what they fear,” what do you think he means? How can believers maintain this kind of mindset in the face of persecution?

Sometimes doing the right thing can get you into trouble. If you see a friend making poor or dangerous life decisions, and out of love you warn them, they might label you a busy body. If you overhear a group at work engaging in offensive speech or gossip, and you ask them to stop, you might earn their ire. In Peter’s day, if you preached the gospel, it might mean you went to jail. Spreading the gospel could have cost them their

lives. The prospect of suffering persecution should not immobilize us with fear. We should instead rejoice if we suffer for righteousness sake.

Peter doesn't want us to fear what others might fear. We should not fear ostracism like others do because ultimately, if we are doing right, it is only God's judgment that matters. Even if we were to face death, we should not fear it as others do because we know that "dying is gain" (Philippians 1:21). We know that if we suffer for righteousness sake, we have the favor of God.

Have a Volunteer read 1 Peter 3:15.

What does Peter tell his readers to do in their hearts when they encounter suffering?

What does Peter tell them to do when persecution comes their way? Why?

One way that we honor Christ in our hearts is by loving Him enough to be unafraid of the consequences in this world for righteous behavior. When we love Christ more than we fear the reprisal of man, we are free to live holy lives. This doesn't mean that we ignore accountability, because sometimes we think we are right when we aren't! It simply means that we know what is right and we do the right thing because we live to please Christ first.

We prepare to give a defense for our hope by being constant in prayer, by learning more about our faith in small groups, by listening to the word taught on a regular basis and by engaging in personal Bible study and prayer. We can also be ready to share our own testimonies about how the gospel of Jesus Christ has changed and continues to change our lives every day. We hope in Christ because the love of Christ has shaped us.

Have a Volunteer read 1 Peter 3:16-18.

Why is it so difficult to give our answers "with gentleness and respect"?

How can Christ's example give us hope in times of suffering?

Oftentimes, our pride and eagerness to defend ourselves can lead us to say things that we wish we hadn't said. Peter admonishes us to be gentle and respectful, even if we are suffering for doing what is right. It may or may not make a difference to those who are accusing or persecuting us, but others will see our reasonableness and may be more attentive to what we have to say.

Jesus' suffering for the sins of the unjust is our only hope for forgiveness. While our suffering cannot save anyone, it can show people the way of Christ. Our patience in the face of injustice can be used by the Holy Spirit to awaken others to the suffering and patience of Christ and as a source of conviction.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How do we honor Jesus as Lord in our hearts? How might we prepare to give a defense for the reason for our hope? What does that mean anyway?

How might we help and encourage one another prepare to give a good defense of the faith through our small groups? Consider what it means to give a defense for hope.

Why might meeting together and being active in small group fellowship help us ease our fears for suffering for doing the right thing?

How does knowing that Jesus suffered unjustly help us endure suffering? Read Hebrews 12:1-2. How did Jesus endure his crucifixion? What was the end result of his death according to last part of verse 2? Allow that last statement encourage your hearts in the midst of persecution!

Prayer

In a time of group prayer, ask the Father to help us be steadfast for righteousness even if it costs us. Pray that the Father will give us wisdom, so we can be discerning enough to know what is right and wrong. Finally, ask the Lord to bless, strengthen and help those who are currently suffering for righteousness sake. Pray for the power to entrust ourselves to God who will restore, confirm, strengthen and establish us (I Peter 5:10).

Commentary

3:13-14 Doing what is good will harm no one, though believers may suffer for it—in which case they should count it a privilege to suffer for God (Jms. 1:2).

3:15-17 Honor... in your hearts means “to acknowledge as holy” from the center of one’s being. This inner reverence for Christ should lead believers to always be ready, especially amid persecution and suffering, to give a frank defense of the hope within them. On “hope,” cp. v. 5; 1:3,21. Believers should always be ready to provide a rationale for their faith, but they should do winsomely and righteously. And if they keep a good conscience, any accusations against them will prove groundless and their accusers will be put to shame. It is sometimes God’s will that believers suffer for good.

3:18 A key statement on the substitutionary atonement of Christ. he suffered and died as the righteous one in the place of the unrighteous, to bring us to God. Jesus’ death makes reconciliation with God possible. Jesus died physically, and God’s Spirit raised him back to life.

