

How to Suffer for Righteousness and Not Stupidity

1 Peter 3:8-18

- I. Two conflicting views from two brothers in Christ. “If these things aren’t coming from your pulpit or aren’t on your radar, you may think you’re in the kingdom, but the kingdom’s not in you.” || “If you aren’t talking about these issues, you don’t have the Holy Spirit.”
 - A. In some ways, today in USA is very similar to when Jesus was around 2000 years ago
 - B. Rome had their agenda, the zealous, the scribes and sadducees, the pharisees, and then Jesus.
 - C. Jesus, who is the same yesterday today and forevermore.
 1. Jesus arrives in the middle of this mess
 2. Jesus knows how to navigate this mess
 3. Jesus maintains his integrity in the middle of the mess
 4. Jesus dies in the mess, because of the mess, and for the mess
 - D. How can we be more like Jesus in our messed up nation today?
- II. *[8] Finally, all of you,*
 - A. In the preceding section, Peter has been talking about specifics (citizens, slaves, family). Now he gives general instructions to all believers.
- III. *have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. [9] Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*
 - A. The first command is primarily internal to the church and it is to “have” each of these attributes
 1. **Unity of mind** → That’s the ESV’s interpretation of the passage. It literally says, “Finally. All harmonious,” Which is Peter’s way of saying, “Be in harmony with one another.”
 - a) Ex: harmony vs. discord in music and the release that comes when a wrong note falls into place
 - b) The community of God’s people should be like a Gospel Song for spiraling out, like a pebble thrown into a calm pond. Our harmonious song of His Excellencies should be refreshing, relieving, and glorifying to God
 - c) This is why unity is so crucial! As the Godhead, the Trinity, sings its song over creation, we harmonize along with our Lord
 2. **Sympathy** → having feelings of pity for someone else’s misfortune;
 - a) Remember, the body feels pain. When you cut your foot, nerves transmit that pain throughout your body all the way to your brain and back again. There is, in a sense, an inner sympathy within your body and that same sympathy to action should happen in our christian community. This sympathy helps to weave that harmonious atmosphere and is impossible without...

3. **Brotherly love** → love is what should come out of our desire to be harmonious and our sympathetic leanings. Love leads to action and is the great manifestation of Christ's work in us. Which is why Peter uses this next word...
 4. **A tender heart** → Maybe more in line w/ our nomenclature, "Compassionate." If sympathy is feeling someone else's pain, then love is the desire that gives birth to action in compassion. We don't just feel it - we do something about it. That is from sympathy to compassion, w/ love being the connecting link
 5. **A humble mind** → Humble. Embracing the call to count others as more important than yourself; to do nothing out of selfish ambition, but only kingdom ambition (Phil 2)
 6. These characteristics, listed by Peter in rapid fire, are deep. We could spend all our time here, but we won't. This type of living, however, is so important for the Christian community.
- B. The second command relates to how we interact with the world. What is the command? Bless those who harm you instead of getting even.
1. What is the temptation when your government is cruel? Get even.
 2. What is the temptation when you are a slave and your master is cruel? Get even.
 3. What is the temptation when your husband is a dolt? Get even.
 4. Instead... Bless. Be a blessing. Bless your government by being a contributing member of society rather than a leech. Bless your master by doing your work well without complaining. Bless your dolt of a husband by respecting him and reflecting godliness and good works. Bless your wife by being tender towards her and loving her well.
 5. We are called to bless, to be a blessing, rather than getting even.
 6. BUT WHY? That we might obtain a blessing... And Peter is going to explain that by quoting from Psalm 34
- IV. *[10] For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; [11] let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. [12] For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*
- A. To summarize: If you have tasted that the Lord is good (c.f. Psalm 34 context as well as 1 Peter 2 context)... If you want to be blessed by the Lord... if you want to please the Lord... if you want the Lord to hear your prayers (c.f. 1 Peter 3:7)... Walk in integrity. Be a blessing to others and receive a blessing from the Lord.
 - B. From the micro at home to the macro of life, small to expansive, be the right person → Love God, Love People, Make Disciples || Hear, Obey, Share
 - C. In the midst of the cruelties of life, be a blessing by walking in integrity instead of getting even.
- V. *[13] Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared*

to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, [16] having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

- A. There is no justifiable reason for people to hate you if you do good, but if you do suffer for living in integrity and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, your suffering isn't wasted and is used by God.
 - B. When you are accused, what do you do?
 - 1. Honor Christ the Lord as holy (integrity in word and deed)
 - 2. Don't panic, be ready to explain
 - a) Jesus said that God will give you words in the moment
 - b) The Holy Spirit will give you testimony
 - 3. Present yourself with all gentleness and respect
 - a) Just like Stephen (first martyr) who had the face of an angel during his execution
 - C. Why? Because then this will be a testimony against your accusers.
 - D. Live a life of integrity and be a blessing even in the midst of evil, hostile, God-haters. Stand up for truth, but do so with love, gentleness, and respect.
 - E. If you are living like that and suffering occurs <HEAR ME> it is the will of God (v17) and you can't get too mad.
- VI. *[18] For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit*
- A. Don't be afraid of suffering because God uses suffering
 - B. Consider Jesus: His suffering in the flesh gives you life in the spirit. If Jesus hadn't suffered, where would we be? Still dead in our sins, still children of wrath
- VII. CLOSING:
- A. If you live the kind of life described in Peter - a life where you....
 - 1. Know you are an exile and this isn't your real home
 - 2. Proclaim his excellencies and aren't afraid of suffering
 - 3. Live with absolute integrity from the home to the workplace to the public sector
 - 4. Don't try to get even but be a blessing to your community and to the world
 - 5. You will be blessed by the Lord
 - B. Integrity will keep you from a great deal of suffering, but (v14) not all suffering. Sometimes you will suffer even if you do all the right things → just look at Jesus on this Palm Sunday
 - C. There he is, riding into the city of God on a donkey for peace. He has come to establish peace on earth between God and man. This is his mission, his task
 - 1. Jesus obeyed the Father first, but subjected himself to earthly authorities
 - 2. He respected the laws, but knew when to break them (e.g. healing on the Sabbath wasn't God's law but man's made-up law)
 - 3. He subjected himself to the laws of the Land (even death on a cross) while obeying the Father

4. He knew that doing the right thing in God's eyes, and even doing good things in the eyes of society wouldn't exempt him from suffering
- D. Jesus died for his Father-exalting integrity, for his Father's mission, and for his obedience to the Lord while being subject to the State. It was the will of the Lord to crush him, to smite him. It was God's plan to have him be a messiah for sin, not a political hero.
 1. That's what we needed.
- E. Bottom Line: If you are walking in obedience to the Word and the Spirit, living a life of integrity, and you still suffer for being a follower of Jesus, then it is God's will. And if it is God's will, then you can be confident he will use it for his purposes as you keep walking forward in that gospel-centered integrity.

Table Talk:

- 1) Families: Talk with your kids about integrity and "being the right person and doing the right thing even when nobody's watching."
- 2) What area of integrity mentioned in this passage is the most difficult for you?
- 3) Why do we naturally fight against suffering and how might we be fighting against God's plan at times?
- 4) Peter said it is better to suffer for doing righteous than for doing evil. What does that look like in today's world?
- 5) If you were going to implement one truth from today's passage, what would it be and how would you do it?