

1 Peter 3:8-12

Returning evil with good

Thank you band. I asked Nicole specifically for the RCM Band to do that song this week – as an intro of sorts for the next couple of weeks. Where we are in 1 Peter – is a transition of sorts in the book to the centrality of suffering in the life of a Christian. Over the next few weeks we will deal with suffering.

Because hear me – Suffering is inevitable for the Christian – but we are called to Honor Christ in and through suffering. Honor him. To bring glory to Him. To declare his greatness in the midst of suffering. How do we honor Christ in the middle of suffering? In the middle of tragedy? In the middle of unspeakable loss? By placing our hope, our faith, our confidence in the greatness of Jesus – the beauty and glory of Jesus – that every single promise of Scripture is Yes for those who have life in Christ. That you are a co-heir, that you have been called by God by name, to life in Christ. That EVERYTHING in your life, God is working together for your eternal good. And that one day, Jesus will come back, and bring you to be with him forever.

Please hear me – SUFFERING IS INEVITABLE, BUT WE'RE CALLED TO HONOR CHRIST IN AND THROUGH SUFFERING. I personally believe that the greatest testimony that we will ever share is the testimony of God's faithfulness in the middle of suffering, and how we honor him in the middle of it.

Turn with me, if you have a Bible, to 1 Peter 3:8-12

⁸ Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble,^[b] ⁹ not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing.

¹⁰ For **the one who wants to love life and to see good days,**

let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit,

¹¹ **and let him turn away from evil and do what is good.**

Let him seek peace and pursue it,

¹² **because 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 what is evil.

PRAY

So our main idea this morning, as we stand firm in the Gospel, is:

Suffering is inevitable for Christians. We must honor Christ in and through it.

And, I want to be clear from the start here that not all suffering is created equal. Some of our suffering is because we're idiots. Scripture doesn't commend suffering for being an idiot. Sleep around and get sick – suffering for being an idiot. Cheat on your taxes and get IRS penalties – suffering for being an idiot. Lazy at work and get fired – you get my drift.

Scripture does, however, commend suffering for the cause of Christ – a righteous suffering. And that's what we're seeing in this text today, and over the next couple of weeks. A righteous type of suffering.

And Peter starts this treatise on suffering, with these 5 traits in V8 – a summary statement of sorts that looks back at the prior 15 or so verses, and launches us forward. Almost like a summary of the mindset of a Christian:

i. 5 Traits:

1. Like-minded OR unity of mind. There's a oneness here that's not manufactured and should/will stand the test of time. Think about all of the things people try to unite around. Football teams, but what happens when your team is miserable, or COVID-19 hits and there's no team. Food? Work in an office setting, you'll quickly find some unity around food preferences – when it's time to grab takeout. Social issues. Climate change. Politics. There's all kinds of things that people CAN unite around. But there's 1 thing that the church, the people of God, elect exiles as Peter calls us – there's 1 thing we unite around – the Gospel of God as declared and displayed in the Word of God. The Word of God and the Gospel of God, really are enough to unite us. To link our minds together as one. As we allow for the word of God to direct and inform and correct.
2. Sympathetic – One of the commentators I read said “not exploitative but supportive.” We sympathize with one another. It's sympathy that allows for us to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.
3. Love One Another – The Greek here is Phileo – the word used to speak of brotherly love. Where we really do want what's best – according to the standards of the Word of God – what's best for one another. And we actively pursue what is best of those we
4. Compassionate
5. Humble – no place for pride in the Christian life.

After laying out these traits, Peter points us to the outworking of our faith – a life changing

ii. Not paying back evil for evil...

See – the default for all of us is to repay evil for evil. Especially in the midst of suffering. We long to get even. Just watch kids play. Deep down in our core – we want to make sure that, if we're ever offended, we get back.

But the Scriptures point us to an all together different way of living. A way of living that says “I trust in the justice of God, but I also trust in the goodness of God.”

iii. Called to BLESS

Called to bless. To speak and to pray for the good of those that treat us wrongly. In Romans 12, Paul writes a parallel teaching to what Peter’s giving us here – and He says – “Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse.” We are called to be a blessing to people – especially those that mistreat us. Remember – main idea for today is the inevitability of suffering in the Christian – but that we MUST honor God in suffering. As we bless those, bless and do not curse, but bless those that persecute us we bring honor to God.

Because the default for all of us is the want to curse those that mistreat us. And don’t get me started as to what I’ll do to you if you mistreat my wife or children. That’s the default here for all of us. Get even. Go get em. Whatever. But the Gospel redirects everything about us. The GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ changes everything about us, and gives us the courage to bless those who persecute us.

And when you bless and do not curse – you bring honor to God. But hear me – it’s not this grit your teeth and fake a smile. It’s a sincere blessing and a sincere desire for whoever is against you to turn from their sin and trust in Christ.

If you go to the book of Acts – the very first Christian martyr is this dude named Stephen. Now, God chose not to have Stephen write any of the books of the Bible. Steve didn’t write any of them. It says that, in CH6 of Acts, that He was performing great signs among the people – says he was full of grace and power. They accuse him of blasphemy. And, rather than run to defend himself, rather than run to protect himself (remember blasphemy in the Jewish law was a capital crime – death penalty) rather than run and hide, our boy Stephen starts preaching. Dude preaches an incredible sermon – calls them people to the greatness of Jesus, points them to the Savior – and they kill him. They kill him by stoning him. Horrible way to die. And the final words he said “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Talk about blessing those who hate you. They literally killed him, and he calls to Jesus asking for them to receive mercy.

HOW??? You see, Stephen, Stephen’s life was forever changed when he met Jesus. He had an encounter with Jesus and was never the same again. He didn’t need to keep score. He didn’t need to get even. Because in Christ, he had all that he would ever need or could ever desire. He had met Jesus, and was living with and for Jesus, and no one could ever take that from him. To the point where he could bless these people that were actively killing him.

But there’s also a benefit to us – as we Honor God in suffering, because suffering is inevitable, as we honor God in and through suffering we experience the blessing of God. Now, I want to be really clear here. When we talk about the blessing of God – I don’t mean healthy, wealthy, and wise. No, I mean something far greater than that – The scriptures teach us that the primary blessing of God is the presence of God in our everyday lives. We come to Jesus – we

don't get a Genie in the bottle that makes us healthy, wealthy, fixes our marriages, fixes our kids – we come to Jesus and we JESUS. Oh and is it ever worth it. get God.

We are called to bless others – even/especially those that do evil to us – and as we do, we receive the blessing of God.

In the SOTM, in Matthew 5, Jesus addresses this head on – and I have to think Peter remembered what Jesus had taught when he was writing. Here's those words from Matthe 5:11-12:

¹¹ "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. ¹² Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

As we consider that Suffering is going to happen – and we must honor God in and through it – Peter gives us the long quote from the Old Testament – Psalm 34 – and a little 2 word summary from me – PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

iv. Pursuing Righteousness

If you're keeping score, we've got 3 verses left – it's not going to be a 15 point sermon. I'm summarizing these last 3 verses that Peter gives us (quoting Psalm 34) all under the heading of PURSUING RIGHTEOUSNESS:

Peter quotes Psalm 34 – **TEACH THEM HOW TO USE THE REFERENCES.** I want to teach you a trick here, how to use the references in your Bible. Hopefully your bible has a little letter at the top right, a superscript, of one of the first words in V10. Mine has a little 'i' there. Now, I see the 'i' and I know that Peter's quoting another section of scripture. My Bible has this middle column of cross references. Yours may be at the bottom. At any rate, find the reference and you'll see PS. 34:12-16. Peter's directly quoting Psalm 34:12-16 here. That's also why it's in bold letters. It's a quote.

And Peter quotes here Psalm 34, which originally would have been sung as a song, - a pursuit of righteousness by:

1. Controlling your tongue
2. Turn away from evil, turn to good. Sounds a lot like repentance as we turn from our sin and turn to Jesus
3. To seek peace, and to pursue it – to seek the SHALOM of God. Not only in Psalm 34, and here in 1 Peter, but back to Jesus's words in Matthew 5 where he says blessed are the peacemakers. And Paul's words in Romans 12, If possible, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with all people.

Because nothing we do is outside of God's view. His eye is on the righteous – like the eye of a loving Father. On all who believe. But the face of his wrath is on and against those who reject the Gospel.

CLOSING

Just like everything Peter's written to us so far – the only way we can make sense of this is through the lens of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the life that he offers through repentance and faith). There's no way it makes sense to endure suffering well, in a way that honors God, apart from God's radically changing your life.