

Unit 1

Living with Hope in a Broken World

Lesson 4

The Endurance of Our Hope

The Question: How should I respond to difficult times?

The Point: We can endure suffering because of our hope in Christ.

Memory Verse

1 Peter 3:17

For it is better to suffer doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Focus Words:

- **Blessing** (v. 9)—The term can mean either “to call on God to grant His grace to someone” or “receiving grace from God.”
- **Righteousness** (v. 14)—Righteousness is being in a right relationship with God through Christ (Rom. 3:20-28) which in turn enables believers to conduct themselves in ways that please and honor God (Gal. 5:6,13-25; Jas. 2:14-25).

Introduction:

As we continue our study of 1 Peter, we are reminded of the volatile environment in which the believers lived.

- Severe persecution had forced many of them from their homes in and around Jerusalem. They were scattered throughout various regions beyond Israel, largely to the north and northwest.
- They held on to their faith, but they faced many new and difficult obstacles.
- They were forced to adapt to new cultures and co-exist with those foreign to the faith. Peter sought to equip them to be effective in living out their faith in a new place of residence.
- Throughout his letter, Peter sought to encourage the believers in Asia Minor to stay faithful in the face of persecution. Peter emphasized that their conduct would set them apart and it should be representative of their confident relationship with Christ. He pointed to their hope in Christ as motivation for staying faithful and included specific actions that God expects of His obedient children. Peter addressed believers' behavior in these foreign lands before turning back to a more general appeal regarding how Christians should live.

1 Peter 2:13(NIV)13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority,

Peter wrote his letter to prepare Christians for the “fiery trial” of persecution, yet his approach was optimistic and positive.

- Peter declared that Christians would suffer for what they believe. However we should not be terrified of it.
- He offered them encouragement that even in the face of trials and tribulations, we must follow the path righteousness as we *prepare for the best!*
- Peter reminded them to consider that Christ had already done the work of preparing a place for believers in eternity and knowing this should give us the confidence, patience, and hope to endure even when we are persecuted.

- Peter reminded believers that the starting point for the Christian understanding of suffering is the messianic self-understanding of Jesus himself.

Isaiah 53:1,5 - *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

- Suffering/testing is essential in equipping believers for ministry and for God's sovereign purpose for our lives.

Isaiah 53:10 But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.

I. We are called to Love and Bless those who intend evil towards us (1 Peter 3:8-12) *Finally, all of you, 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. 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."*

After spending time on how Christians should reflect Christ in their various roles (2:13–3:7), Peter resumed a more general approach (**all of you**) in terms of how believers should conduct themselves, using five adjectives.

- **Like-minded**-as a command this could be translated literally as "think alike." Peter was not urging absolute uniformity of thought but a general agreement on core doctrines and appropriate conduct both within and outside of the church setting.
- **Sympathetic**-Paul's urging in Romans 12:15 most likely captures the meaning of the term: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep."
- **Love one another**- comes from the Greek adjective (*philadelphos*) for "loving one's brother." This kind of love should be the rule, not the exception, for Christian brothers and sisters.
- **Compassionate**-comes from a Greek term (*eusplagchnos*) sometimes translated "tenderhearted." One who is *compassionate* is sensitive to the needs and opinions of others.
- **Humble**- part of being humble entails considering others to be more important than yourself.

Phil. 2:3- Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Peter urged his readers to demonstrate these five traits and he also called on them to go even further. Not only should they love and care for one another, they should also avoid responding to evil acts and words with the same kind of evil behavior.

Matt. 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth'

Rom. 12:17 (ESV) 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

Jesus provided specific guidance for His disciples;

(1) They should give more than what was taken or demanded (Matt. 5:39-42)

(2) They should love their enemies and pray for their persecutors (Matt. 5:43-44).

(3) They should forgive those who have hurt them (Matt. 6:12,14-15).

Believers are saved by grace through faith; however, we should demonstrate the evidence of our salvation by the way we live

Eph. 4:1- *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love*

We give a blessing/grace to others, even to those who mistreat us.

Matt. 25:40- *And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, [a] you did it to me.'*

Peter here was referring to how believers are to deal with non-believers who persecute Christians because of their faith. He was not addressing the issue of abusive relationships. No where does Scripture require that a person remain in an abusive relationship. Peter urged God's people to:

- Guard against speaking words which were evil or full of deceit
- Reject every kind of **evil** and replace it with **what is good**
- Seek peace and pursue it
- Live a lifestyle that is attractive and draws others closer to God

We must always be intentional about avoiding contentious behavior, because God is always watching over **the righteous** and listening to their prayers. However, the Lord turns His face away from **those who do what is evil**.

Question: Can your relationships with other Christians be described as harmonious, sympathetic, loving, compassionate and humble? If not, how can you adjust to hit the mark?

Spiritual Truth-God has set a very high standard of conduct for His saints. It is indeed an impossible standard, apart from His grace. We are to be a blessing to those in this world, even our enemies, knowing that we are destined to receive God's blessings in the future and experience them now in the present.

II. Our hope in Christ carries us through any suffering 1 Peter 3:13-14- 13 (NIV)

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats [a]; do not be frightened." [b]

Peter addresses suffering directly in instructions to his readers as foreigners and slaves.

In Vs 13 Peter asks what seems like an odd question: Who is going to harm you if you are zealous or eager to do good? The question could be read in two ways.

- (1) Those who are eager to do good, even to those who hurt them, are much less likely to be mistreated. Certainly in most times and places, that is true.
- (2) Doing good to others rarely inspires their desire for revenge.

Peter argues that it is better for believer to be zealous about doing good, in the eyes of the Lord because when the wicked are provoked, they are more wayward; difficult to control or predict because of unusual or perverse behavior. In Vs 14 Peter acknowledges that Christians may very well suffer for the sake of righteousness.

- Peter reminded believers that they have a secure and abundant future with the Father in eternity.
- Jesus, our example, suffered for our benefit, so we should not be surprised to suffer for His sake.
- We should not fear, for to suffer for the sake of Christ is a blessing and a privilege.

Question: When have you felt God speaking to you in the midst of your storm.

Spiritual truth. When we are suffering (or we are being persecuted) for righteousness sake, and we take it patiently; we are blessed by God and prepared for the next trial.

III. Faithfulness in suffering displays hope in Christ 1 Peter 3:15-17 (KJV)

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

`16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

`17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

- Peter quoted the passage from Isaiah to calm the fears of those whom he addressed and preserve them from any alarms in view of the persecutions to which they might be exposed; the trials which would be brought upon them by people. He admonishes them to not lose perspective.

Isaiah 8:13 (KJV) Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

This means that:

- Christ will rule us completely as Master and His will should be our desire
- If Christ is Lord and Master, then we should have no trouble not only believing His Word, but also obeying it to the best of our ability
- Studying diligently the Word of God so that we can be armed with a solid understanding of the truth and be prepared to answer questions or accusations for our hope in Christ with a gentle, well-reasoned answer from the Scriptures

2 Tim. 2:15(KJV) 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Col. 4:6 (KJV) 6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

- When we put what we believe into practice keeping "a good conscience" others will see that we live like we actually believe what we say we believe!
- This means finding real, everyday ways to apply the principles we find in God's Word so that when we are belittled for what we believe, they will see a person committed to Christ, no matter what the cost.

Heb. 13:18(KJV) 18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

- If God wills that we should suffer, for the Father sometimes chasteneth children, it is better to suffer for righteousness, than for evil.
- Since suffering was the means by which the sinless Christ became mature, it is evident that his followers will experience, and even require, suffering in the process of their sanctification.

Hebrew 5:8-9 8 *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;*

Question: Are you ready to explain your faith if someone asks?

Spiritual truth: The Christian's hope of endurance lies in the fact that Jesus loved us enough to offer Himself as a sacrifice to God, then defeated death by His glorious resurrection from the dead thereby giving us a confident, reassuring expectation (hope) that we, too, will one day live a never ending life with Him in the very presence of God!