

1 Peter

Part 10 – Suffering for Good

1 Peter 3:8-17

Peter now shifts his focus back to the topic of suffering. He begins this section teaching on the qualities of Christian character needed by the church to maintain its witness in a hostile and unbelieving culture. Peter addresses relationships inside and outside the church body. Within the church, believers are to pursue a posture of compassion, love, and humility toward one another. To those outside and opposed to the church, Christians are to follow the example of Jesus, as he did not repay evil for evil. Instead, he refrained from personally seeking immediate justice and allowed his holy conduct to put his enemies to shame.



The calling of the Christian is to be a blessing to all kinds of people in this world. The call to bless is not averted when the Christian is persecuted, demeaned, or slandered. On the contrary, Peter states the believer will receive a blessing in the midst of his suffering for righteousness sake. This passage was an encouragement to the afflicted 1st century exile who was struggling with fear and uncertainty. Comfort is also available for the modern-day sojourner who is suffering for what is good. An eternal blessing awaits those who find their identity securely in Jesus. This truth motivates the Christian to bless others amidst suffering which in return puts the gospel on display to a watching world.

Main Idea: Christians are called to bless and do good to those inside and outside the church, even in the midst of painful suffering and persecution.

1. A godly posture toward insiders (verse 8).

- Literal reading: Now the summary, all of you, of one mind, sympathetic, loving the brothers, tenderhearted, humble-minded.
 - As we seek to live these out, but do so imperfectly, it puts the gospel on display for others. Our failing efforts reveal our need for a Savior. Our slow but steady progress reveals the work of the Spirit in our sanctification.
 - Chiastic structure
 - Unity of mind
 - Sympathy
 - Brotherly love
 - Tender heartedness
 - Humility of mind

2. A godly posture toward outsiders (verses 9-12).

- Revile – to subject one to verbal abuse; to criticize in an abusive or angrily insulting manner
- Reviling is much more serious in an honor/shame culture
 - Current youth culture has many elements of an honor/shame system
 - Our society promotes returning reviling for reviling
 - The church is called to return reviling with blessing

- Imperatives from Psalm 34
 - Guard your tongue. It can bring life, or speak poison.
 - Seek peace and pursue it.
 - Resisting or thwarting someone who is seeking to unbiblically harm themselves, another person, or harm you is returning evil with good. This must be done in appropriate ways, but it is an act of peacemaking.
- Indicatives from Psalm 34
 - The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. He listens to their prayers. What a privilege it is to have the attention of the almighty God.
 - The face of the Lord is against those who do evil. It is right for us to shudder at the possibility of encountering the face of God in his wrath. This is our motivation to pray for those who are lost, to pray for our enemy, and to share the gospel openly.

3. A godly posture toward suffering (verses 13-17).

- If you suffer for good, you will be blessed. Not an immediate material blessing, but an eternal reward in heaven.
- Literally: Do not be afraid with the fear of them. We are to be aware of what we fear, intentional in who we fear. We fear the one we believe is in control. Our fears have the potential to reveal our idols.
- Be prepared. This is more than a book or seminar on evangelism or apologetics. Are you prepared? Do you really believe the Scriptures to teach the absolute truth and contain the most comprehensive and satisfying answers to life's hardest questions? Suffering and persecution will put your faith to the test. Suffering also reveals our idols. It exposes the source of our functional hope. Is your hope in Jesus?

4. Concluding thoughts

- The character of the Christian and the church should be consistent. Our posture, our actions and relationships, inside the church and outside, and in the midst of suffering, should show consistency if our hope is placed in Christ.
- The true good that Christians do will most likely not be applauded, but reviled. Take heart, this is evidence those around us are noticing our submission to Jesus. Some will respond with questions, others with more reviling. Let us respond to an antagonistic world with the blessing of the gospel.