

Suffering for Righteousness' Sake

1 Peter 3:8-22

⁸ 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.”*

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.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered^[b] 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, ¹⁹ in which^[c] he went and proclaimed^[d] to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because^[e] they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

INTRODUCTION:

Despite being in weak and vulnerable positions as citizens subject to governors, servants subject to masters, and wives subject to husbands, Peter exhorts his readers to exercise agency in response to evil and suffering from those in authority over them. Yet, they are called to make a surprising response - to repay evil not by passively enduring suffering and not retaliating, but actively blessing the evildoer, that they may love their enemies and pray for their persecutors.

Peter provides three reasons for making such a radical response to evil and suffering:

1. God calls us to it (vv9-12)
2. God is in control (vv13-17)
3. Christ is our example and vindication (vv18-22)

DISCUSS:

1. Blessing Those Who Do Us Wrong

Peter calls us to do something deeply counterintuitive: not only to refrain from repaying evil with evil, but to bless those who hurt or wrong us. This can be difficult because our natural response is often to seek justice, defend ourselves, or make the other person feel the pain they have caused us. Yet Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. To bless the evildoer is not to excuse their wrongdoing, but to refuse to allow their evil to shape our response.

**Why is it difficult for us to bless someone who has hurt or wronged us?
What might God be inviting us to surrender when we choose to bless rather than retaliate?**

2. Trusting God When We Cannot Understand

Peter reminds us that even when we suffer for righteousness, our suffering is not outside God's sovereign will. We may not always understand why God allows us to suffer, but we can trust the character of the God who holds us. As we see from Romans 8:28, we can trust that God is at work even when we cannot see what he is doing.

When you experience suffering or injustice despite trying to do what is right, what makes it difficult for you to trust God? What would it look like for you to entrust that situation to him?

3. Following the Righteous Sufferer

Christ is not only the one who calls us to suffer for righteousness; he is the one who has gone before us. He suffered for the unrighteous, was rejected and put to death, but was ultimately raised, vindicated and exalted. Our suffering does not have the final word because Christ has already won.

How does the gospel of Christ - that Jesus died for even us who were sinners and unrighteous - give us a different perspective on how we should respond to those who sin against us?

When you are hurt, rejected, or treated unjustly, how might remembering Jesus' victory and universal authority encourage and comfort us?

PRAY:

1. For Courage to Suffer for Righteousness

- Pray that we would remain faithful to God when doing what is right becomes difficult or costly.
- Pray for courage not to compromise our convictions simply to avoid suffering, rejection, or inconvenience.

2. For Hearts That Bless Rather Than Retaliate

- Pray that God would search our hearts and help us surrender our anger, desire for revenge, and need to be proven right.
- Pray that we would have the grace to bless those who hurt or oppose us, following Jesus' example of loving our enemies.

3. For Faith to Trust in God's Sovereignty and Christ's Victory

- Pray that when we suffer unjustly and cannot understand why, we would trust that God remains in control and is working according to his purposes.
- Pray that we would keep our eyes on Christ, the righteous sufferer who was vindicated and exalted, remembering that his victory is ultimately our hope.