

# Godliness in Suffering

1 Peter 3:8-25

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## 1 Peter 3:8-22 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech." <sup>11</sup> They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." <sup>13</sup> Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." <sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup> For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—<sup>20</sup> to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, <sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

## v8 – What does it mean to be like-minded?

*Be of one mind:* Most of us are willing to have **one mind**, as long as that **one mind** is *my mind*! But the **one mind** is to be *the mind of Christ* (1 Corinthians 2:16). Our common **mind** is to be Jesus' mind.

- This speaks to the essential unity of God's people. We are one; but we are not all the same. God has built both unity and diversity among His people.

- Every cell of your body is different and has its role to play. But every cell in your body has the same DNA code written in it, the master plan for the whole body.
- We could say that Christians should be like a good choir. Each one sings with his own voice and some sing different parts, but everyone sings to the same music and in harmony with one another.

## How may we be like-minded?

This command brings us back to the need to know God's word. We can't **be of one mind**, the mind of Jesus, if we don't know what His mind is. The word of God shows us the mind of Jesus.

## What does being like-minded look like?

*Having compassion... tenderhearted... courteous:* Peter described the kind of warm love that should be among the people of God. We should be compassionate, brotherly, tenderhearted, and even polite.

## Why is it important that we love one another?

This was the measure Jesus gave to the world to identify His true disciples: "*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (John 13:35).

- Jesus did not command us to *like* our brothers and sisters in Christ. But we are commanded to love them; and once we start loving them, we will start liking them.

## v9 – Why shouldn't we repay evil with evil?

The greatest challenge to our love for others comes when we are wronged. At those times we are called to not return **evil for evil**, but to give a **blessing** instead.

## How should we respond to conflicts with fellow Christians?

No dispute, argument, or personality conflict among believers should linger. Even if one Christian gets out of line, the loving response of other Christians should keep the problem small and short-lived.

### **What makes the love of Jesus stand out in the world?**

The natural response to hostility is retaliation. This is what the terrible ethnic conflicts all over the world are all about — one group wrongs another, and dedicates the rest of its existence to repaying that wrong. Only the love of Jesus for our enemies can break the terrible cycle.

- It is no great credit if we love those who love us in return; the real test of love is to demonstrate compassion to our enemies (Matt 5:44-47).

### **How may we inherit a blessing?**

We love one another, but not only for the sake of Jesus, whose body we are members of. We love one another, but not only for the sake of our brother or sister for whom Jesus died. We also love one another for our *own sake* — by blessing those who have wronged us, we will **inherit a blessing**.

- If you can't love for the sake of Jesus, or for the sake of your brother, then do it for your *own sake*!

### **v10-12 – What is the blessing we receive from turning away from evil to do good?**

A quotation from Psalm 34:12-16 demonstrates the blessing that comes to those who turn away from evil and do good.

- Avoiding deceitful speech will result in loving life and seeing good days.
- Doing good instead of evil and seeking peace pleases God and results in Him hearing our prayers.

### **Is it easy to do good in the face of evil?**

Doing good is often difficult because as a general rule, evil is rewarded immediately and the reward of doing good is often delayed.

- But the rewards of good are better and far more secure than the rewards of doing evil.

### **v13 – Will doing good always avoid an evil response?**

No... Though Peter says that Christians should always answer evil with good, he also lived in the real world and he knew that people often repaid good with a response of evil.

- Ultimately God will repay an evil response to our doing good... His justice will be done.

### **Should we seek after being loved by the world?**

Not to be hated by the world is one of the most terrible positions in which a Christian can find himself.

John 15:19 – *If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

An ancient sage asked, “What bad thing have I done that this worldly person should speak well of me?”

### **What does it mean to be eager to do good?**

*If you become followers of what is good:* Literally, **become followers** is “be zealous.” “Some Jews were zealots, boasting their zeal for the Lord or His Law... *all* Christians should be *zealots for that which is good*.

### **v14-15 – What should we expect if we suffer for righteousness' sake?**

Peter reminds us that there is even a blessing for us when we **suffer for righteousness' sake**. God will care for us, especially when we **suffer** unjustly.

### **How should we regard just the threat of potential suffering?**

The possibility of suffering for doing good should not make us shrink back from doing good.

- Instead, we should give a special place (**sanctify**) to God in our hearts, and always be ready to explain our faith (**give a defense**), always doing it with a right attitude (**meekness and fear**)... (v15).

### **Why is the threat of suffering connected with giving a defense of our faith?**

Because when we live out our faith even in the face of suffering, it can lead to an opportunity to plant a seed that can lead people to Jesus.

### **v15 – How do we revere Christ as Lord in our heart?**

The simple meaning is that at the very center of life there is to be one Lord, and that is Christ... Other lords are not permitted to invade the sanctuary of the heart, and to exercise dominion over us.

- When we allow our own selfish desires, the opinion of others, worldly wisdom, the pressure of circumstances, etc. to lord over us, we turn away from our simple and complete allegiance to the Lord of lords.

### **How may we be ready to give a defense for the hope we have?**

Prepare a short testimony of what led you to recognize Jesus as your Savior.

- Be prepared to address what you believe and why you believe it... OK, the Bible but this begs the question: how do you know the Bible is true? Be ready for that!
- Be prepared to address certain topics likely to come up for specific people.

### Why should we give our defense of our hope with gentleness and respect?

The way we address a question posed to us challenging our hope is as important as what we say. If we come across as defensive, it will bias people against us.

- Don't talk down to questioners... pagans don't have a biblical world view so we should try to explain things from their perspective.
- Try to avoid "church words" ...even the word "sin" has baggage, substitute "selfishness" instead.

### What is Christian apologetics?

The English word "apology" comes from a Greek word which basically means "to give a defense."

- Christian apologetics, then, is the science of giving a defense of the Christian faith.

### Why should we be ready to defend the Christian faith?

There are many skeptics who doubt the existence of God and/or attack belief in the God of the Bible.

- There are many critics who attack the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.
- There are many false teachers who promote false doctrines and deny the key truths of the Christian faith.

The mission of Christian apologetics is to combat these movements and instead promote the truth.

### Are there different types of apologetics?

There are two primary methods of Christian apologetics...

- Classical apologetics involves sharing proofs and evidences that the Christian message is true.
- Presuppositional apologetics involves confronting the presuppositions (preconceived ideas, assumptions) behind anti-Christian positions.

Both methods should be used depending on the person and situation.

- Apologetics is most effective at reinforcing the faith of existing believers and helping "seekers" move closer to the Lord.
- Apologetics will have less impact on hardened unbelievers but is still important.

### v16 – Why else should we have good behavior in Christ?

Our **good conduct**, when our good is returned with evil, will prove others wrong in their opinions about us and it will make them **ashamed** for speaking against our godly lives.

### What role does a clear conscience have in our good behavior?

The Holy Spirit convicts us of what we should and should not do.

### v17 – If we are going to suffer, what kind of suffering should we prefer?

None of us want to suffer. But if we must, may it be for **doing good** and not for **doing evil**.

- Sometimes Christians are obnoxious and offensive and are made **to suffer** for it. They may wish it were persecution for the sake of the gospel, but really it is simply suffering **for doing evil**.

### v18 – What does it mean that *Christ also suffered once for sins*?

Jesus **suffered once for sins**. There is no longer any sacrifice or atonement that can please God other than what Jesus provided at the cross. Even our own suffering won't pay for our sins. The price has already been paid.

### How was the suffering of Jesus far greater than anything His children would experience?

The suffering of Jesus on the cross was worse than any ever suffered by a martyr; perhaps not worse in the physical pain suffered, but certainly in the spiritual suffering and total experience.

*Matthew 27:46 – My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*

From eternity past, God the Son had never experienced a break in fellowship with God the Father. But as Jesus bore our sins, the Father had to break fellowship with Him for a time.

### What example to us is the suffering of Jesus on the cross?

*The just for the unjust*: Jesus is a perfect example of suffering for doing good. He, the **just**, suffered for all of us who are **the unjust** — and the purpose of it all was to **bring us to God**, to restore our broken and dead relationship with Him.

### How should we respond to Jesus suffering for us?

Since Jesus did all this to **bring us to God**, how wrong it is for us to not come to God in fellowship! The ancient Greek word translated "**bring**" is the same word used for *access* in Romans 5:2 and Ephesians 2:18.

- In ancient literature, the word **bring** was used "of admission to an audience with the Great King."

### How was Jesus *put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit*?

Jesus did die in His body but was raised from the dead **by the Holy Spirit**. Here, the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead.

- It also tells us that the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 6:4), and it says that Jesus raised Himself from the dead (John 2:18-22). The resurrection was the work of the Triune God.

### v19-20 – What did Jesus do after He was made alive in the Spirit?

*He went and preached to the spirits in prison:* Many believe this work was done in the period after Jesus' death but before His first resurrection appearance to the disciples. Jesus went to Hades — the abode of the dead — and **preached to the spirits** there.

- **By whom:** This means that Jesus was *inspired by the Holy Spirit* when He did the work of preaching to the spirits in prison. He was *made alive by the Spirit*, and then also did this work by the same Spirit.

### Who were these spirits in prison?

These were probably demonic spirits. We know that their disobedience was *in the days of Noah* (1 Peter 3:20).

- We have evidence that this was a time of gross sin for both demons and humans, when there was an ungodly mingling of humans and demons (Genesis 6:1-2).

### Why did Jesus preach to the imprisoned spirits?

In all probability this *preaching* was not *evangelism* (the proclamation of good news). Jesus **preached** a message of *judgment* and final condemnation in light of His finished work on the cross to these disobedient spirits.

- In doing this there was a completion in Jesus' triumph over evil, even the evil that happened before the flood.

The Bible says that even those *under the earth* must acknowledge Jesus' ultimate Lordship...

Philippians 2:10 – *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth*

### v20-21 – What is the connection between the Flood of Noah's day and baptism?

Even as Noah's salvation from the judgment of God was connected with **water**, so the Christian's salvation is connected with **water**, the water of **baptism**.

- The water of the flood washed away sin and wickedness and brought a new world with a fresh start before God.
- The water of baptism does the same thing, providing a passage from the old to the new.

### Why should Christians be baptized?

*Not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God:* At the same time Peter was careful to point out that it isn't the actual water washing of baptism that saves us, but the spiritual reality behind the immersion in water.

- What really saves us is the **answer of a good conscience toward God**, a conscience made **good** through the completed work of Jesus.

- Water baptism is a public demonstration of identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- Believer baptism is an ordinance... an act of obedience not a requirement for salvation (which would be salvation-by-works).

### v22 – What does it tell us that Jesus is at the right hand of God?

We see the completeness of Jesus' work by His exaltation to the **right hand of God** the Father, and the subjection of all created spirits unto Him (**angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him**).

- So, though Jesus suffered for doing good, He had the ultimate triumph. The example of Jesus proves Peter's point in 1 Peter 3:9: when we suffer for doing good, we will inherit a blessing.
- Our connection with Jesus is like the little boy with his kite which flew so high in the sky that he could no longer see it. Someone asked him, "How do you know it is still up there?" The boy answered, "I can feel it pull." We can't see Jesus enthroned in heaven, but we can certainly feel Him pull us toward Himself.

### What applications come to mind from this passage?

- Christians are called to be like-minded; we are one in Christ so we should act like it.
- We are blessed when we suffer for Christ.
- Apologetics is for all Christians... be ready!
- Believer baptism is a public profession of faith in Christ