

Living good lives under suffering

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[0 : 00] And Peter is showing in our passage kind of answers we've given to this person, Amy, that we can expect in the Christian life suffering.

! But we also know the blessings of having a saviour, Jesus, a saviour who's gone himself through suffering, but is now in glory.

And our passage points us to that and very clearly does at the end, as we'll see. So the pathway we're going on involves suffering, but we're going to end in glory.

We expect suffering, but look forward to glory. We'll see three things this evening. The first is this. Be a blessing. Be a blessing to one another and to the world around us.

So first of all, to one another. Peter addresses us saying, finally, all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

[1 : 07] And I think the central command here in this little verse is about loving one another, loving brothers and sisters in Christ.

Loving one another as we're walking through the Christian life, which involves suffering. But isn't it great that we can kind of gather as God's people and encourage each other, love one another? It strikes me, it's a bit like coming to church on Sunday. It's a bit like a kind of team talk. So imagine a football team really struggling, struggling for morale.

They've been battered and bruised. They've lost the last few matches and they're really struggling. But the manager gives them a team talk, peps them up. You can do this, guys.

And as Christians, we're not on our own. It's hard. We can expect suffering. But we do it together as God's special people.

[2 : 19] And so love one another. Love one another, church. And he says some other things. He says be like-minded. Kind of have that sense of unity together.

We're of one mind. We share together as one in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. We don't go alone. Together we're heirs of that inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

Be like-minded. That can be hard. We're different. We have differences. But we're united together in the Lord Jesus Christ, aren't we? He says be humble.

Be humble towards one another. He's not saying, say to yourself, I am no good. That's not humility. But it's kind of a willingness to serve, to lay ourselves down, put our own interests, others' interests ahead of our own interests, as the Lord Jesus has done for us.

[3 : 25] Be sympathetic with one another. Know that together we're in the Christian life together.

And so when one of us is weeping, we weep with them. When one of us is suffering in the Christian life, maybe struggling at work, because we're a Christian, we're sympathetic to one another.

We know it's hard living as a Christian in this world. We also rejoice with those who rejoice. Be sympathetic with one another. Rejoice in the news of pregnancies at the moment in our church family.

We can rejoice with our brothers and sisters in that. Be compassionate as well. Have a deep, deep inner concern and care for our fellow believers.

Be compassionate as we walk through this world, this world that's not our home. And in being like this, we'll be a blessing to one another.

[4 : 32] What a wonderful picture that is, these things are. As we seek to be a blessing to one another. But also, Peter says, be a blessing to the world around us.

Be a blessing to the world around us. Notice what he says there in verse 9. He goes on and says, Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

On the contrary, repay evil with blessing. Because to this you were called that you may inherit a blessing. As we're living such good lives in this world, this world that's watching us.

Peter's told us already, they may accuse us of doing wrong. They may insult us. They may insult us. They may do evil against us for living right.

Living these such good lives that we're called to as believers. This watching world may seek to harm us rather than do good to us.

[5 : 39] People may insult us. They may call us bigoted, narrow-minded, out of date, irrelevant. Do we then insult them back? Peter says, no.

Repay evil with blessing. We're called to live differently from the world around us. The world around us may be, people might be insulted and they'll insult each other back.

And a big fight may start and it could get nasty. But Peter encourages us and says, no. Repay evil with blessing. Because we're blessed.

Because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. We have such blessing, don't we, as Christians? We know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter spoke about this in chapter 1. He wrote to his readers and said this. Praise be to God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 41] In his great mercy, he's given us new births into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have new births.

We have new life. We have a living hope in Jesus. We have such blessing. We have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Kept safe in heaven for us. We are so blessed. Isn't it wonderful if you're blessed with something that you share it with others?

Stephen Brenda is thinking of you with your plums. You had abundance of plums and you shared it with us. We are so blessed with abundant life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's share that blessing with others. Even if people will insult us for being a Christian. And surely this is following the way of Jesus.

[7 : 41] One of the ways we can bless those who are against us is pray for them.

It's a hard thing. Love is hard. Love towards those who are hating us surely is really hard.

But don't wish them ill. Pray for them. Pray that they too may come to know the blessing of knowing Jesus as their saviour. None of us deserve that.

And it's not that Jesus said this but didn't do it. Verses we keep coming back to at the moment in 1 Peter 2 verse 21.

To this you were called because Christ has suffered for you. Leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth.

[9 : 01] When they held insults at him he did not retaliate. When he suffered he made no threats. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. Jesus has lived like this.

And to this we're called. Called to follow in his footsteps. Peter goes on and he quotes from scripture. Quotes from Psalm 34.

There in verse 10 to 12. And as we look at those verses we kind of see that psalm now through a Christ lens. So verse 10.

For whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. Loving life, seeing good days.

Surely those good days are the days to come in eternity. We will see good days now and that's a real blessing from God. But we look forward to even better days in the eternal life that we have in Christ.

[10 : 06] That God blesses us, his children with. And we live out the identity that we have as God's people.

We're encouraged in this psalm. Keep your tongue from evil. Your lips from deceitful speech. Turn from evil. Do good. Seek peace.

Seek peace with those who insult you. May do evil to you. And pursue it. But what an encouragement verse 12 is.

Because we're not on our own in this. We have one another. We have the blessing of each other. We also have the blessing of God being with us. We're not on our own in this world.

It's not like my first day of secondary school when mum and dad left me at this strange school. I didn't know anybody. I was terrified.

[11 : 05] And we, even if we feel on our own in this world. Through the suffering that we can expect as Christians. Remember that the eyes of the Lord are on you.

He is watching you. And he hears your prayers. His ears are attentive to your prayers. And he's against those who do evil.

They may be doing evil now. But justice will be done. Jesus entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

And we can too, too. The Lord is looking upon us. And he goes on and says, Who is going to harm you if you're eager to do good?

Seems a bit odd, him saying that. Yeah, who is going to harm us if we're doing good? That's what we're called to do. Live such good lives. Why are you talking about suffering here, Peter? But then he goes on and says, But even if you should suffer for what is right, if you suffer for doing what is good, you're blessed.

[12:16] What do you mean, Peter? If God has blessed us, if God is for us, who can be against us? What can any man or woman do to us?

We are to expect suffering in this world. That is normal as Christians. But the worst that can happen is we may die for following Christ.

But if that happens, we get to receive that promised inheritance that can never be taken away from us. We expect suffering, but we look forward to glory.

Reminds me of these words that Paul wrote, For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else, in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of Christ that is in, from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So what can people do to us? Who is going to harm you if you're eager to do good? They may do, but they can never take the blessing we have in Christ away from us.

[13:34] And with that in mind, we're going to pause, we're going to sing. We're going to sing of our hope in life and death, which is Christ alone, Christ alone.

Our souls belong to him. We are safe in his hands. And we can sing, Hallelujah, our hope springs eternal. Hallelujah, now and ever we confess.

Christ, our hope in life and death. We'll stand and sing as Phil leads us. We live these lives, people may kind of scratch their heads and think, why on earth does that person, even though I keep insulting them for their faith, why do they keep going?

Even though I keep mocking them for going to church every Sunday, for being involved in that, why on earth do they keep going? And Peter uses the next verse to prepare us for times when maybe people will say, why do you keep doing this?

Verse 15, 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.

[14:55] But do this with gentleness and respect. Peter says, give a reason. That word reason in Greek, if you're interested, is apology.

It's where we get the word apologetics from, which means to defend, to defend our faith, to defend that hope that we have. And I think that hope that we have in Christ, it frees us to share Christ with others, even in the face of suffering.

Notice, Peter says in verse 15, firstly, revere Christ as Lord, fear Him. As one writer puts it, fear of man will keep us quiet, but God's love will open our mouths.

Fear of man will keep us quiet, but God's love will open our mouths. sharing this hope is a way of being a blessing to the world around us.

And as we're called to do this, we're called to do it with gentleness and respect, not in arrogance, not in pride, thinking, I'm better than you, I have this hope, you don't. But no, to do it with gentleness and respect.

[16:16] That respect is respect towards God. Part of fearing God, not man. A couple of questions to chat in groups for, time's going very quickly, for five minutes, I'll give you five minutes, be generous.

Have a chat about these two questions. How does knowing that we cannot lose God's love for us help us to share the reason for the hope we have with others? and how can we prepare to give a reason for our hope?

And maybe you want to share examples of when you've done this. Have a chat in your groups, five minutes. Go. Let's move to the final point because we're running out of time and this is really important.

Be looking to Christ. Be looking to Christ. Christ. So, we've thought about suffering and all this suffering for doing good, for following the way of Christ.

Steve's mentioned like people even lose their jobs over speaking about Christ. I think I and I guess all of us would go insane if it wasn't for this kind of final bit, being pointed to Christ, knowing Christ has gone before us.

[17 : 34] We're following his steps. We expect suffering. We will go through suffering in this world for being a Christian but we look forward to glory and we look to Christ who's done that.

So, Peter says in verse 17, for it is better if it's God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil and he tells us that Christ has done exactly that.

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.

Jesus died to bring us to God, the righteous one for the unrighteous. Put to death at the hands of cruel men he committed no wrong.

The most unjust suffering ever. We may suffer unjust suffering but we know that Christ has to and we look to him.

[18 : 39] It was surely the greatest swap of all time, the most unfair swap. We are so unrighteous, we are wicked, we are evil in God's sight but Christ has died in our place.

It reminds me of a silly story but when I was younger me and my brother collected match attacks cards, football cards and I remember my brother being so cross with me for swapping our shiny Cristiano Ronaldo for some Portsmouth player.

Outrageous, unjust, unfair swap. the cross is far more unfair than that. An unfair swap.

But what great news it is for us, without it we could not have this hope that we have. Without it we could not share this hope that we have. Without it we could not bless, be a blessing to others and tell them of it.

We wouldn't be a blessing and be able to pray for them. We know his peace, we know sins forgiven because of the cross.

[19 : 50] Jesus died to bring us to God. Secondly, Jesus is victorious over his foes. This is a complex few verses. We've only got a few moments to look at it and you may disagree with what I say but you can talk to me about that afterwards.

Jesus is victorious over his foes is the big thing Peter's saying in these verses and I'm convinced that this interpretation I may be wrong. He says here in verse 19 after being made alive he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits.

To those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. Who on earth are these imprisoned spirits that Jesus makes proclamation to? That Jesus kind of proclaims victory over? in Genesis in chapter 6 it talks about Genesis chapter 6 verse 1 when human beings began to increase the number on the earth and daughters born to them the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful and they married any of them they chose then the Lord said my spirit will not contend with humans forever for they are mortal their days will be 120 years the Nephilim were on the earth and also afterwards when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them these sons of God these sons of God I think are fallen angels it talks about that in 2 Peter and in Jude they're now imprisoned spirits imprisoned beings and Jesus goes after the cross and makes proclamation says victory

I've won the victory over sin death and hell that's the big point whatever this all means in verse 19 Jesus is saying I've won the victory I make proclamation I've won the victory over sin death and hell and that's our saviour Jesus who suffered and is now victorious and is now seated in glory he brings us resurrection life and we have that picture don't we in baptism so verse 20 when the ark was being built in it only a few people eight in all were saved through water and that water is a symbol it's a symbol of our salvation water is a symbol of judgment and Jesus has passed through the waters of judgment for us and we are safe in him united to him and that baptism it's a symbol of what's happened to us a symbol not of removal of dirt that's what water does but it's a symbol of what's happened within we have a clear conscience towards God

[23 : 00] Peter says with our sins forgiven and it's all because Jesus has suffered for us to bring us to God and he's now in heaven and he's at God's right hand and he's victorious with angels and authorities and powers in submission to him Jesus brings us resurrection life Christ has suffered and he is now seated in glory Peter is saying with all things under his feet even those who do evil

against Christians Christ has won the victory justice will be done and so Amy who was asking what can I expect from the Christian life we can expect suffering but we have the blessing of knowing Christ knowing Christ who's brought us to God knowing Christ our sins forgiven knowing that in Christ we have a glorious future hope together and therefore what can people do to us nobody can take that away from us they may harm us but they cannot take our salvation away from us our hope is in

Christ let's share it be prepared to share it and let's follow in his footsteps as we seek to live these such good lives among a world that is watching us we're gonna sing to Cleve's um