

Living well under suffering

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[0 : 00] All right, if you'd open up to 1 Peter 1, 1 Peter 1, verse 13 through 19. Here's the word of the Lord, beginning in verse 13.

It says, therefore, therefore, taking into account everything that is written in verses 1 through 12, now he draws a conclusion. Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy. And if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Let's pray. Father, we need your help today to understand your word. We also need your help to be able to live it out and to apply it. So I pray that you would help us on both accounts, and I pray that you would get all the glory in Christ's name.

[1 : 34] Amen. When an emergency or a crisis occurs, do you feel confident to be able to handle it? I say it's a medical emergency.

Do you feel like you could confidently handle that medical emergency? If it's some sort of natural disaster, do you feel that you're confident to be able to handle that sort of crisis as well?

There's a study that was done that says that of non-first responders, so people who have been trained in this, not including them. So the rest of us, like me, yahoos like me, that have not been trained in any kind of first responder or emergency management or anything like that, did you know that most adults in that position, 68% believe that they are capable of handling a medical or other type of emergency?

That study also said that your chances of being able to handle it better obviously goes up if you are prepared. I say that because this is what Peter's doing right here.

Like Peter, in the first 12 verses, in the Greek, it's one long sentence, and he's laid out this massive case for the glory of our salvation that shapes us and readies us and prepares us to face suffering, suffering.

[3 : 03] And now he comes and he gives three commands in these verses, and these commands become kind of themes that he weaves throughout the rest of his letter and he's going to come back to them.

And these three things, if we'll understand what these commands are, that it prepares us to deal with the suffering in life, not in terms of emergency management handling, but in terms of the suffering that comes at us personally.

So I want us to look at these three commandments. They are be hopeful, be holy, be fearful. Be hopeful, be holy, and be fearful. Let's talk about each one of those. The first one is in verse 13.

It is to be hopeful, and the command is to set your hope fully on the grace to come to you. The idea of hope is not a wishful thinking, but it's an expectation.

It's a confidence. We're to set our confidence fully on the grace that's to come to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And it's coming to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 10] What exactly is the revelation of Jesus Christ? The revelation of Jesus Christ is the second coming of Christ. Now, let's talk about the second coming of Christ for just a second.

Let's define it so that we're all on the same page. The second coming of Christ is his promised return in which there will be a massive resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous, and

then we will go straight into the great white throne judgment, and people will be separated, the righteous to eternal life, and the unrighteous to eternal punishment.

So once the second coming happens, then it all unfolds, and it's all over. In other words, Jesus is coming back at his second coming, and the revelation of Jesus Christ is that second coming.

Now, there are people out there that teach something different. They teach that Jesus is actually coming back two more times.

They will say that Jesus is coming back in some sort of secret way that's not really explained in Scripture, but at that time, only the righteous will then be dealt with, and then they will be disappeared from this earth, and then a thousand and seven years later, the second coming will happen.

[5 : 34] Now, that's the books, the Left Behind series, and we have left it behind. The Bible does not teach that there are two more comings of Christ.

It teaches that there is one more coming of Christ. He is coming. And from now till that day, and then in a large way on that day, he gives grace to us as believers constantly.

As a believer, every day, I live by grace, the grace that helps me to think the way he thinks, the grace to act the way he wants me to act, the grace that matures me and helps me to love the things that he loves, and on that day, on that day, an immeasurable amount of grace as he finalizes our salvation by giving us our forever bodies, the incorruptible bodies that we're going to have.

And so what we are to do is we are, as people who are either in suffering or who will face suffering, we are to set our hope fully on that day out there somewhere in the future in the grace that he is bringing to us.

Now, here's the second thing I want to ask about this commandment. Why should we do this command? Is there anything in the text that tells us you ought to do this, or here's a good reason for doing this?

[7 : 15] And I think that when you look at the word, therefore, he's basically saying verses 1 through 12 form up a very big reason why you should set your hope fully on the grace of God that is to come to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

If we backtrack just a little bit, we know that part of the reason we should set our hope fully on what is to come is because the Father foreknew us, because the Spirit sanctified us, because the Son sprinkled us clean, because the Father gave us new birth through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, because we have an inheritance that's incorruptible, pure and holy, eternal, everlasting, guarded by God's power, because we have a love for Jesus even though we've never seen him, because the prophets have been writing about this salvation from the beginning, because angels long to look into the salvation that we have, because our salvation is so great, we ought to set our hope on the end of our salvation, the final fulfillment of that salvation when Christ returns. That's why we should look at that. And I know, I know, that there are some of you who might object to this. Now, maybe not really you, but somebody who listens to this might object because you're extremely practical.

And you might say to yourself that the idea of looking to the sweet by and by to help me in the day, day, here, now, and the difficulty of today seems not very practical.

I don't need to have my head in the clouds while my feet are on the ground. I don't need to be so heavenly minded that I'm of no earthly good. And I don't know about you, but when either I've had a long day at work, maybe it's been a difficult day, maybe I've had to deal with all kinds of difficult things, or maybe I have gone on a trip and the kind of trip that I despise called camping.

[9 : 30] What gets me through is knowing I get to go home. And I've been there in those days when it's not been a pleasant day.

And the way that I get through that day is I remember my wife's at home, my kids are at home, my family loves me, and I'm ready to go home. Beloved, here we are in the middle of suffering and potential suffering.

And the one thing your mind ought to think is this, your father and your savior, they're waiting on you and they're ready to come get you.

And in the end, that's where we get to go. And so then, how are we supposed to have this kind of attitude? How are we supposed to live out this idea of being hopeful?

Well, he says in verse 13, he gives these two images. He talks about preparing your minds for action and being sober minded. Now, preparing your minds for action, the old King James says, gird up the loins of your mind.

[10 : 40] Now, I just want to have a show of hands here. How many of you know what it means to gird up the loins of your mind? Do you know what that image is all about? Okay, so let me see if I, let me explain it to you.

So, they didn't have pants back then. They just wore robes. Right? Which is basically a dress. But if you're a man, you call it a robe. Right?

And to gird up your loins was to grab the backside, the piece of cloth hanging back here to grab that, bring it forward, and stuff it into your belt or rope or whatever.

And now, guess what? You got pants. And this made it easier to run. This made it easier to do battle. If you don't do that, then your legs get all tangled up with all of the flowing fabric all over the place.

Right? So, the image that Peter is using is he's saying, listen, gird up the loins of your mind.

Prepare your mind for action. Right?

[11 : 45] Bring all of the mental and emotional faculties that you have to bear on this. Then he uses the second image.

And he says, be sober-minded. The image is of that, of a mind being ill-affected by alcohol. Right?

If you drink too much, you get to the place where that mind is affected.

It's going to cause all kinds of things. You need to be clear-thinking. And for them, the idea is not about, it's not about the alcohol specifically, but it's about that there are truths and there are ideas out there that cloud our judgment.

There are things that we believe and there's things that we experience and ways that we interpret life that cloud our judgment. For instance, if you death scroll Facebook, that's going to cloud your thinking.

If you watch any kind of TV whatsoever, it's going to cloud your judgment. The point is, is that he says, listen, you need to set your hope fully on the grace of God that is to come to you and you need to do so by taking and bringing to bear all of your mental and emotional faculties with the truth of God's word to bear on this situation.

[13 : 06] When we lived in Pollack, Texas, we lived in the parsonage of Pollack Baptist Church, which was on one side of the road.

The road was a two-lane road that was 70 miles an hour and the church was on the other side. So obviously, I would just walk almost pretty much like this, except the road speed limit here is a little bit less.

And we had all five of our kids at home with us and our youngest one was about two years of age. And if you're standing in the front door looking out of the house, there's Jim Bell Loop. It's just a little side road that connects to Highway 7 here.

The church is over that direction. And the side yard is this big hill that just drops, I mean, just immediately drops down to the highway. And we're standing in the front yard and I'm facing this way and one of the other daughters yells out and I turn and look and the youngest one is three-quarters of the way down the driveway almost to the side road.

And at that point, she would be only about 20 feet from the 70-mile-an-hour road. I know that I don't look like an Olympic runner.

[14 : 15] But in that moment, nothing else mattered. It's almost as though the world went still and all of my mental faculties and all of my physical abilities were just honed in right there and I put Barry Allen to shame as I made it down to the end and I scooped her up.

I'm just trying to illustrate that as we go through suffering, what we need to have is to bring all of our mental and emotional faculties to bear with the truth of God upon this situation of suffering.

because what happens to me in suffering is that I start to get into this death spiral of thoughts, thoughts of doubts, thoughts of dread, thoughts of negativity, thoughts that just swirl down and the Lord doesn't want us to do that.

The Lord wants us to depend upon Him, to look to Him. And part of what we have to do is we have to have some truth to think about. And if we're thinking about the revelation of Jesus Christ, we're thinking about the second coming.

And so I would encourage you to think about passages such as this one, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, that speaks of the second coming of Christ. As he says, but we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

[15 : 47] For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord.

In other words, this is what Jesus taught in Matthew chapter 24, at least in parts of it, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command and with the voice of an archangel, with the sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord.

Therefore, encourage one another with these words. when we are facing suffering, we see it coming.

We need to be hopeful because of the greatness of our salvation and bringing everything to bear to set that hope, to set that hope upon Him.

[16 : 58] But the second thing is that we need to be holy. We need to be holy. verses 14 through 16. The command is in verse 15 that you also be holy in all of your conduct.

Now this command to be holy is not just, you know, in one area of life, but it talks about all of your conduct. Now I'm just going to make a plug here. If you're using the King James, it's going to say your conversation.

And if you're going to read the King James, then buy yourself a 17th century dictionary because otherwise you won't understand the English that's in it. In the 17th century, the word conversation meant your behavior.

But today, we use the word conversation to mean our talk. So you just got to understand that you're talking about a different language when you're looking at King James English.

Now New King James has got it a little bit more modernized so we understand what's going on here. He's not telling us to be holy in the way we talk and that's it. He's telling us to be holy in all of our conduct.

[18 : 08] All of it. Your actions, your thoughts, your desires, your hopes, your dreams, your motives, your attitudes, your affections, all of it should be holy. Now what does it mean to be holy?

Well two things I think will help us. Number one, to be holy means to be like God. Look at verse 15. But as he who called you is holy, as he is holy, you also be holy.

So what actions would God take? What thoughts would God think? What affections would God have? What attitude, what motivates God?

Those should be the things that are ours as well. We should be like God. But the other thing is that this word holy literally means to be set apart. It's something that's other than.

It's something that's different from. And this holiness is all about that we are different from the world. We don't live like the world.

[19 : 12] We don't act like the world. We don't respond like the world does. And it's important to think about being holy for someone who's going through suffering because a person who's going through suffering is a person who still experiences temptation to sin.

A person who's suffering is a person who still, as a Christian, loves the Lord. A person in suffering is still a person who's been saved by the Lord and seeks to please the Lord even though they also experience temptation to sin.

So here they are still trying to live the Christian life loving the Lord and being tempted to sin. Suffering does not remove those things from us.

And so as a Christian who's going through suffering, there is still a need to fight against our sin because under suffering, temptation to sin is harder to fight because we have other things going on. And it becomes harder to hold our tongue. It becomes harder to hope in God. It becomes harder to not be angry and then also sin. It becomes harder to think of others as more important than myself when I'm going through suffering.

[20 : 35] But suffering does not give us a pass on sinful behavior. Suffering does not get us a wink from God that says, listen, it's okay if you sin just a little bit because I know you're struggling.

No. Jesus Christ endured suffering at the hands of lawless men yet he is without sin. And that is the way we should be as well.

So why should we obey this command? What's the power behind this command? It's interesting because in verse 15 he says, he who called you. As he who called you.

So is God himself who's holy the one who's called you and because he's called you you should be holy. In other words, this calling is the effectual call of salvation that a person hears in the gospel message where the Holy Spirit draws and convicts them and takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh.

Basically, Peter is saying, listen, because you have been saved, because you've been raised from the dead, because you've been rescued by the blood of Christ, because you are now gone from being dead to being alive.

[21 : 46] Because of that, live a holy life. He's not telling us to live a holy life to get life, but he's telling us to live a holy life because we have been saved already.

And so how do we live out this command? How do we live out being holy? Well, what's interesting to me is verse 16.

where he's quoting scripture. Want to take a guess what book of the Bible he's quoting? Leviticus. Now, if you've not heard anybody preach through Leviticus, come on, that's funny. Come on.

Anyway, it's up on the website. I just got through with Leviticus, so go back and listen to it, right?

Ugh. But here's the thing. As he quotes from Leviticus, it's almost as though he is saying that being holy means for you to be someone who's obedient to the law of God.

[22 : 54] It's as though he's telling us you need to live the way the Israelites lived, who listened to the commands of God and obeyed him. because the same God who demanded holiness from Israel is the same God who still demands holiness from us.

The difference is is that in the new covenant, the laws are written on our heart so that we have the ability to obey. And listen, we talked about when we went through Leviticus about these different kinds of laws and I understand that there are some things about some of these laws that we don't do any longer.

Like we're not sacrificing animals any longer, right? And we talked about in that sermon series why. And some of the judicial laws are not things that we have to do because we're not a theocracy although there's something about the heart of those laws that we need to pay attention to.

My point is this though is that God is just as holy and just as demanding of obedience from us as he was the Old Testament and just because we're suffering doesn't mean we get a pass.

So in suffering I still need to know what has God commanded and that's what I need to obey. What has God commanded and that is what I need to obey because without obedience to God's commands there will be no holiness.

[24 : 24] Without obedience to God's commands there will be no growth as a Christian. even the great commission even the great commission says this teaching them to obey all that I've commanded teaching them to obey all that I have commanded and this is not about legalism this is not about trying to get the cart before the horse and you know focus everything in on law obedience and who cares about grace no no grace is all the way through everything listen to what Hebrews tells us Hebrews chapter 13 it was the verse that was on the video earlier it says in verse 20 now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant now you can basically take all of that information and this is just talking about God now God and it's going to say something he's done and everything else that I just read was just description of who

God is okay so verse 21 starts with equip you so now the sentence is now may the God of peace equip you and may he equip you with everything good that you may do his will primarily doing God's will means obeying his laws right and then he says this working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ in other words even as a Christian you've been a Christian for 20 years 30 years five years it doesn't matter but even as a Christian as he tells you that you ought to encourage one another as he tells you and commands you that you ought to forgive one another he's not expecting you to walk over there pull yourself up by your bootstraps and go okay I'm just going to forgive no he also works in you to give everything that is necessary for you to actually forgive because I don't know about you but there are some people that sometimes you think about forgiving them and it seems almost impossible because what they have done is so terrible the only way you can truly forgive someone in that is not because you've pulled yourself up by your bootstraps but because of what

God is working in you by his grace so even in suffering not only do we need to be hopeful but we need to be holy and finally we also need to be fearful fearful verse 17 through 19 the command is to live in fear or to conduct your life in fear that word conduct is the same word that's in verse 15 it's

about all of your actions affections attitudes thoughts and words we're to live with fear fear ought to characterize all of your life now that sounds very opposite from where I started the service today but we're not to fear just anything the scriptures tell us all kinds of things to not fear right I will fear no evil we're not to fear evil we're not to fear any person what can man what can man do to me he says we're not to fear the future we're not to fear punishment but we're to fear

God we're to fear God and that's one of the things that's talked about in the proverbs a lot right the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom one commentator wrote this I think this is a great definition of what it is to fear the Lord okay so listen listen to this definition to fear the Lord is to be conscious of his all pervasive presence now just stop right there for a second when you wake up he's there when you lay down he's there when you drive to work he's there when you eat he's there when you brush your teeth he's there when you're getting that extra cookie that nobody saw you get he's there when you grumble under your breath because you don't like the person you're having to deal with he's there when no one else is there and you're nursing the thoughts of bitterness in your mind he's there the fear of the Lord is the knowledge of God's all pervasive presence but it's also an absolute moment by moment dependence upon him for light and life a moment by moment dependence upon him for light and life my lungs contain these little bitty things

I don't even remember what they're called but they're what take in the air and allow me to breathe those things are made up of bunches of different kinds of molecules and not only that but there are molecules out here and these molecules out here that are the oxygen that I need these molecules and the atoms that make up all of these different molecules the scriptures tell us that he holds the universe together by the power of his word and so when I go to take in a breath my lungs don't just disintegrate into nothing because by his word he's holding those little sacs in my lungs together and he's holding those molecules of air together so that as they travel through the sinus passage that the molecules are being held together by him and they connect to these other things in here and then that gets transferred to the rest of my body all of these things are being held together so that I can't take a breath that God did not by his own power hold me together to take

[30 : 43] I am dependent upon him every single moment is that in your head I mean is that only in your head when like you barely missed the deer or is it in your head all the time that you can't even coach you can't read you can't drink you can't brush your teeth you can't do anything without God because he holds you together and so a fear of the Lord is this moment by moment dependence upon him for light and life keenly sensitive to our comprehensive responsibility to do all that he has commanded I don't get to walk around and look through things and kind of have this stack of 100 commands from God and pick out four that I like when we were at home with my parents my mom had all the chores that we were supposed to do and she tried every system in the world and one of them was putting all the chores on cards and we were supposed to pick the ones that we liked it's like well okay

I just like this one I don't want to do the rest of this and I think sometimes as Christians that's the way we get we have no fear of God in our minds and because of that we pick and choose the things we want to obey and we don't get that opportunity and then he goes on to say that we're to be fearful of offending him determined to obey him and committed to loving him I don't want to disappoint the Lord does that pervade every area of my life that's what that command is we're to be fearful of the Lord so then why and I think Peter gives us two big reasons why should we do this first he says if you call on God as your father in other words you have a relationship with God and you're praying to him right that idea of calling upon him or calling him father is the idea of prayer when you recognize that you're going to your father who impartially judges you got to keep both in mind right he sits on a throne and he also sits at the table you got to bow before him at the throne but also you get to have dinner with him sitting side by side next to him you get that sort of transcendent greatness and kind of scary

God whose righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne and you get this intimate who loves us and wants us to call him abba father and picks us up in his arms he is both and we go to him in prayer because we are praying to him because we have that relationship with him we ought to fear him but then he says this knowing that you were ransomed from this futility ransomed from this futility from this futile way of life inherited by your forefathers or from them and it's it's ransomed by the blood of Christ this futility is this word that comes out of the book of Ecclesiastes vanity of vanity all is vanity it's the Hebrew word havel it's this idea that life is a wispiness life is a vapor like life is futile and vain and worthless it's a little bit like this that you've got a child and you're changing

diapers five times a day and you feel the weight and the monotony of changing diapers you ever notice how the changing of diapers never ceases you get up in the morning and you have to change a diaper you finish breakfast and you have to change all the diapers and you feel the weight of this you feel the monotony of this you feel almost like the lack of accomplishment in something like this and then you happen to look up and he's graduating from high school and you go wait I was just changing diapers can we go back there I kind of missed! that for a moment because this is getting too far out that way and you can't change it I'm sorry to say it's doing laundry over and over again never really accomplishing anything with that life is full of these things we work and we toil and we save and we build a legacy only for someone to come after us and ruin it all you see houses built and you see other structures built only to see it waste away and covered over the Bible describes that every single person whether you're Christian or non Christian we are affected by this futility of life that

God has subjected the world to because of Adam's sin and Ecclesiastes tells us there's two ways to live you can A live as a pagan trying to relieve the monotony and the frustration of life through pleasure politics power possessions superstitions on and on and that's what Peter is saying to these churches he's ransomed you from the futile way of life from your forefathers the way you as pagans tried to escape from this Hebel he's ransomed you from that the second way that we can live Ecclesiastes tells us is to recognize the gift of God in the middle of all of these things listen to Ecclesiastes chapter 2 beginning of verse 22 he says this what has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun for all his days are full of sorrow and his work is a vexation even in the night his heart does not rest this is also a vanity can you imagine that your heart doesn't rest it's always beaten it's always beaten verse 24 there's nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil but wait a minute you said it's full of vexation how can I find enjoyment in the toil because of this this also

[37 : 42] I saw is from the hand of God for apart from him who can eat and who can have enjoyment the ability to look at the monotony of diapers laundry work and all the things that happen in this life the ability to enjoy that in the middle of it stems from the relationship we have with God he has ransomed us from the futile way of life giving to us the gift to be able to enjoy life so when we go back to Peter he is saying that Christ has ransomed us from these futile ways that our forefathers tried to deal with this pain and this suffering and sorrow life is hard but we don't have to have a pagan mindset about it we don't have to drown our sorrows with alcohol we don't have to use vengeance to protect our reputations and we don't have to use force to make our legacies last we have been redeemed from that way of living can you imagine finding a gentleman who has broken into every house in the county broken into stores stealing as much as he can steal and then you catch him and you find out he's the most wealthy person in the state of

Texas and wouldn't you look at him and kind of go what are you doing taking this stuff you could have bought a hundred of it and I ask you the same question if you're a Christian why are you still facing life like a pagan trying to handle the pain and the sorrow and the suffering the way the pagans do rather than setting your hope being holy and living in fear of the Lord because he has set you free from the tyranny of the pagan way of life and he has set you free to fear him to love him to follow him to know him and to be set free you can truly live in a right proper fear of the Lord because the blood of Christ has purchased your life so how do we live this out three things and then I'll be done number one you got to remember that you were ransomed by the blood of Christ you got to remember that you were ransomed by the blood of Christ and that's a great place for someone who's not a Christian to kind of really reckon with this and ask yourself have you been ransomed by the blood of Christ have you trusted in him is your destiny set towards heaven and Christ because if not then none of these things are for you and so you've got to reckon with that first the second thing is to remember that life is short life is short and the things that we experience and the sufferings that we go through Paul calls it a light momentary affliction compared to the eternal weight of glory that we're going to have and so remembering that life is short helps us because it helps us to realize that there are some of these things that are going on and some of these things that bring pain that don't have to be life stoppers we are here to live for God's glory this is the warm-up to get us ready for the real thing the eternal home that we have with him and the third thing I would say is this obey Christ obey Christ in all things look at his word look at the things that he's commanded and find those places where maybe you're not being as obedient as you should and ask him by his power and strength to help you obey let's pray together