

## 1 Peter 3.8-22, 13 May 20

### Suffering for Doing Right

Having shown the wonder of God's salvation through Jesus Christ and exhorted the early converts to strive to live as God's holy people, modelling their life on Christ, Peter then urged them not to be led astray by the ways of the pagans (our study last week). Instead, he has encouraged Christians to display their freedom in submission for Christ's sake.

In vv.8,9 Peter summarizes his letter to this point. And then turns to the calling that is on the Christian's life as a result of what God has done. Verse 9b says. '*It is for this that you were called — that you might inherit a blessing.*' (NRSV) So, we are called to live a life of blessing, a life that responds to the grace of God by being who we are meant to be - images of Christ in a broken world.

1. In v.8 Peter identifies five characteristics of a life that brings blessing. Can you list them? (*see answers at the end of this study*)<sup>i</sup>

Peter quotes from Psalm 34 as giving reasons for obeying verse 9.

2. From vv.10-12, what are the benefits of living this way? (*see answers at the end of this study*)<sup>ii</sup>.

Read Romans 12:17-21 and compare Paul's teaching with Peter's.

3. How can we live this this life of blessing?
4. James 1:22 tells us that when we merely listen to the Word without putting it into practice, we deceive ourselves. What kind of self-deceiving excuses or rationalization do you

think could most easily keep Christians from actually doing what we're told in verse 9?

Verse 13 suggests that those who are eager to do good should generally be well received by others. But this is not always so!

5. Can you think of a time when you suffered in some way because of an effort to do good?

Christians, in particular, have suffered down through history. Recall that last week's passage (1 Peter 2:11-25) indicated that the least we can do is to show willingness to serve God wherever he has placed us - to accept and live with suffering and learn from it. Jesus' unjust suffering for his submission to his calling was provided as our example to follow and this is reiterated in v.18 of today's passage. Jesus suffered because of his steadfast dedication to his mission.

Perhaps we should not be surprised when the same world that has rejected Jesus also rejects us – even when we are endeavouring to do good. Like Jesus, we are to bear unjust treatment as part of our calling.

Verse 14 tells us that, '*... even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed.*' (NRSV) We must understand that suffering is not the opposite of blessing. To express it another way, if we are suffering, it does not mean that we are not blessed.

6. In what way is the Christian blessed, even when suffering?

Peter assures us that under God's care and blessing, no evil can befall us. Compare this with Psalm 56:4, and Paul's assertion in Romans 8:31.

Jesus said that those who suffer for righteousness are blessed. Read Matthew 5:11-12. Then re-read the Beatitudes in vv.3-10.

Jesus gives hope. Be steadfast in serving our neighbours – persevere in peacefulness and long suffering in love despite the suffering. The love that raised Jesus from the dead is stronger than the hate and fear we might have to face.

7. How can we endure the suffering brought by being faithful to God?

In v.15, Peter encourage us to find in persecution an opportunity for witnessing. Read again in vv.1b-2 in Chap 3 why he encourages us to live in a way that displays the characteristics that you identified in Question 1 above (from verse 8).

8. In the guideline about suffering given in verse 17, notice the statement about which kind of suffering is better. From what you see in this chapter and elsewhere in Scripture, exactly why is this kind of suffering better than the other kind?

In v.21b, Peter identifies baptism, ‘*as an appeal* (or NIV has ‘pledge’) *to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*’ (NRSV). Baptism is a symbol of salvation through our identification with Jesus in his death and resurrection. In the act of baptism, we commit ourselves, in all good conscience, to make sure that what baptism symbolizes will become a reality in our life.

So, baptism marks us with our true identity – a child of God, who is embarking on a journey of knowing and growing in love as we become more like the love revealed to us in the resurrected Christ.

## 9. How can we grow more like Jesus in love?

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<sup>i</sup> Unity of spirit, sympathy, brotherly love for one another, compassion, humility.

<sup>ii</sup> Life will be gratifying, days will be good, God will be watching to bless them, prayers will be heard.