
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 1 Peter

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1 Peter 3: 13-22: Suffering for Doing Good!

General idea: This passage begins Peter's discourse on suffering (3:13-5:11). When something bad happens to someone who is bad, we should not be surprised. We should expect to suffer if we do evil and reproach to others. We may think because we are in Christ, we are not subject to the laws of society. However, we are not above others in rights and liberties; we are only saved by His grace. This passage has some more tough stuff for us to grapple with—a call to endure suffering for doing what is right and good while serving our Lord. The logical thinking is if we do good, then good should be paid back to us in return, and in most cases this is what happens. However, in a sin-infested world we sometimes get paid back with evil for our faithful goodness and sincerity. Peter is warning us of the realities of the world, as those who are not in Christ (even misguided fellow Christians) may come against us in harsh ways because they do not like to be convicted or bothered about their will, mindsets, and sin; so, they attack us.

The other aspect to this passage is the continual theme that Christ, as our example, did not fight back. When something bad happens, we tend to quickly resort to lawsuits, and sometimes even physical actions to pay them back. But, our call is to not pay back evil with evil. Most cultures see this attitude as indicative of weakness and helplessness, but God sees it as a display of trusting in Him, and as displaying real strength with meekness and self-control. By being gentle when someone is challenging us with words, deeds, threats, or abuse, we show Christ, help defuse the situation, and make a huge impact for those who need an example to follow to know Christ.

Vs. 13-17: Life has suffering as a prime motif; everything suffers, as we will find out in the next passages. The emphasis is not on answering *why*; rather, how we can live through it. There is a glory to pursue in life greater than our desires and emotions, and that is how we can grow closer to God and make Him known to others around us. Thus, we need not fear and worry; rather, we should pray, prepare, and trust in God (Isa. 8:12).

- *Harm you* indicates rhetorical meaning that when we do good, who would hurt us? However, we will suffer for righteousness and it is not realistic to think otherwise. Thus, we must prepare our attitude and faith for it (Pet. 4:12). This refers to when others seek to harm us, as the more we exhibit His Fruit, the less likely, in most cases, we will be harmed unless it is outright persecution. This was, perhaps, a Jewish axiom that when we are good to others, they are good to us. The better our behavior and attitude are towards others, the better we are treated. The worse we are, the worse we will be treated.

- *Even...suffer.* When we are in Christ, no harm will come to us that is not allowed for a purpose; so, we can trust in Him and endure.
- *Blessed* echoes Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:10-12. This is more than an emotional state of satisfaction, well-being, and contentment because it results from being approved by God for our fulfilling our duty. It is enjoying God's special favor and His grace working in us. It is not based on how we are feeling or our circumstances; rather, it is the reality of God's grace, love, and favor in us. It is like being told by our parent/father that he is proud of us. Here, it refers to when we suffer for the truth, we are blessed beyond measure and rewarded for our faithfulness (Psalms 1; 15)!
- *Fear.* We are to fear God, not other people. Peter was seeking to pastor his people so they could make sound decisions and not be afraid of those who hate God. We can take comfort that no force can take away what Christ has given. Our security is in Him, not in how we are treated (Psalm 56:4; Luke 12:4-7; Rom. 8:31-39).
- *Set apart.* This is referring to the divinity of Jesus Christ, that He is God, He is Divine, and He is the True Holy God (Isa. 8:13)! Our call is to make a firm, ongoing, deep commitment to Christ.
- *Be prepared* means we are the ambassadors of Christ and are called to show, through our lifestyle and words, that He is The Lord and Savior (2 Cor. 5:20). We may come across hostile people who hate God and will hate us for being in Him; even so, we are still to operate with respect and gentleness!
- *Answer* refers to "apology," as in *apologetics*, to give a defense as a lawyer defends his client. We should know about our faith and with our best efforts and abilities share it with others, *even use words when necessary!* A good Christian should know about the Bible and faith, and practice it, not only to grow, but also to share it with other people. We do not need to know all of the answers (I certainly do not), but we should know where to get the info and then get back to them. We are always to share with maturity of character even when others combat us. Our faith will eventually undermine those who are against us. Our *apologetic* ("answer") is always to be given with love, never in degrading terms.
- *Ashamed.* Good Christian conduct will be convicting to those who are not in the faith or have backslidden; then guilt and the Holy Spirit can work on them. At the same time, when we are above reproach, it is hard for anyone to make a slanderous accusation against us because it will be obviously untrue (1 Pet. 2:12-15).

- *God's will* means all that happens is in the providence of God. Here, it signifies that our suffering should only be from others seeking to harm us, not from making wrong decisions or sin (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:19).

Peter was trying to get his people to trust further in Christ and thus have more patience when times got tough, because people will come against us all. If someone pays back your good deeds and words with evil, God will judge them, in His better way and better time. Do not usurp His authority; allow Him to be God, allow Him to shame those who harm you. If the abuse is unlawful or you are being harmed to the detriment of your mental and physical state, then involve other church members as stated in Matthew 18 in addition to any civil authority. However, in doing so, we still must show the love of Christ. There is a balance between being meek and carrying a sword or using it to defend and protect (Luke 22:36; Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:4-5).

Vs. 18-22: This passage is about how we are as a witness, and that this is more important than our feelings to get even or hesitancy to do good. This comes down to how we, as an example of the Lord, are being a witness for the Lord. Our desire to fight back is a temporary solution to our emotional struggle. This only ends up escalating the situation and proving true the critics of Christ and His Church. When we remain in control of our emotions and physical reactions, our witness will resonate into eternity.

- *Christ died*, Jesus takes our sins and covers them from God's sight by His work on the cross! This is called *atonement*. We are justified and saved by Him and Him alone; no work on our part contributes to it. We only respond, out of our gratitude, to do good (Lev. 17:11; Job 15:14-16; Psalm 5:4-6; Isa. 53:4-6; 64:6; Jer. 44:4; Hab. 1:13; Matt. 27:37; Luke 22:37; John 2:2; 4:10; Rom. 10: 2-3; Gal. 3:13; 4:4; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14-22; 2:14; Heb. 2:17; 9:11-15; Rev. 1:5).
- *Once for all* means Christ bore the sins of all (Isa. 53:12; Heb 9:28).
- *For the unrighteous*. Jesus not only paid our debt of sin, He is the example of how we are to be in our conduct and character (Phil. 2:5-11).
- *Made alive by the Spirit*. Who and how we are should manifest what the Spirit does in us. The image is that God and the Spirit, separate in distinction, yet One God, gives us our witness along with our own spirit (John 10:17-18; Acts 2:32; Rom. 1:4; 8:1-11; Gal. 1:1; 4:6; Eph 1:20).
- *Preached to the spirits in prison*. The theme is God's just judgment and His offering of undeserving grace that must be accepted by faith to commensurate. Also, as suffering servants, we are vindicated! There are two views to this verse. 1. Jesus, as a "theophany" (His pre-incarnate state, meaning before He became to earth as Jesus), preached through Noah and

the rest of O.T. personalities to call sinners to repentance. 2. Jesus, in those three days before His resurrection, visited “Sheol (Hebrew),”/“Hades (Greek),” the place of the dead. As the Apostle’s Creed says, He “descended into Hell,” and gave one last opportunity for repentance to the sinners and/or the fallen angels who rebelled before His declaration of victory (Gen. 6:1-4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 2 Pet. 2:4-5; Jude 6). This does not mean that Jesus “finished” His work of our redemption there or fought with Satan for the keys of Heaven!

- *Sons of God/spirits* refer to a type of angel (Gen. 6:1- 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 1:21-23; 6:12).
- *Water...baptism.* Water is a significant image in Scripture from the creation, to Noah, and then to John the Baptist and the call to baptize. The flood symbolizes sin and judgment that point to our need for salvation (2 Pet. 3:6-7) as well as how God intervenes and saves. Baptism symbolizes our identification from the sign and seal of the salvation we received from Christ and also represents Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. This tells us the importance of sincerity in repentance and baptism and the proclamation of our faith.
- *The removal of dirt.* Baptism is not to be just a ritual, rather our response for the gift of His grace, so we make a declaration, a promise to be a committed Christian of principles and virtue (Gen. 7:7; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 4:1).
- *Right hand* means status and a display of power and authority. Here, it refers to Jesus as being Sovereign, Supreme, and fully God (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1; Heb. 1:3).

God is the One who keeps us and rewards us. Even when the world is falling apart around us, He cares for us, so we have no need to worry or fret. If we do good (and we should always strive our best to do so), people will come against us. We should not stop or become afraid, frustrated, or disillusioned; rather, we should keep it up, showing the work of Christ in us. We do this by worshiping Him! Let Him be your Lord; that means He leads in all aspects of your life. We do this by being readers of the Word so we can be doers of the Word, and be a person who is the Lord’s display case as the Word of Life is played out in your actions and relationships.

How do you display the wonder of His love and grace in your daily life? How do you react when someone at school or work hurts you? How do you hope in Him, worship Him, and allow Him to be your lead? What you say, how you say it, what you do, and how you do it will be prime witnesses for our Lord. We are called to be ready to explain our life in Christ, but we cannot do that if we are not showing that work of Christ. When we do, it will always be in the parameters of the Fruit of the Spirit. If we argue, we demean our Lord who Himself did not argue when He was persecuted. When we argue, it puts the other person on the

defensive and they do not listen; therefore, they do not learn. Our efforts of evangelism will not only be wasted, but it could also have a negative effect, doing more harm than good. Thus, we are called to respect, listen, and be gentle so the real Gospel message goes out from us not only in how we are, but also in how and what we say.

He suffered and endured the ultimate evil for being the Ultimate Good, and did the ultimate good for us. He is our example in life and upon whom our eyes must always stay! Thus, we are called to be enthusiastic and faithful! It is far more important how we are to others than anything we say; if we are not what we should be, the message gets compromised and distorted!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
5. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. When something bad happens to you or to someone around you, what do you tend to do first? What should you do?
2. How do you hope in Christ, worship Him, allow Him to be your lead? Does knowing that your security is in Him and not how you are treated help you when you are going through a tough time?
3. How do you react when someone at school or work hurts you? How should you react?

4. What do you think about the concept of suffering? Why does God call us to endure suffering, even for doing what is right and good, while serving Him? What does it mean when we remain faithful in suffering?
5. How does the fact that Christ is our example in suffering give you hope and endurance?
6. Given that our call is to not pay back evil with evil, why do you think most cultures and people may see this as being weak and helpless? How do you see it? How should you see it?
7. How would you explain that there is a greater glory we are to pursue in life? How do your desires and emotions play in this? How should they be used?
8. Why do you suppose that the emphasis found in the Bible about suffering does not answer *why*, but rather tells how we are to live though it? What does this mean to you?
9. Have you experienced that when we are good to others they are good to us? How so? What do you do when someone is challenging you with words, deeds, threats, or abuse? What can you do to help defuse the situation?
10. What happens when someone is gentle with you when you are going through a tough time? What can you do to be a person who is gentle and gives hope and respect to others for the faith? What would your life look like by doing this?
11. How do you react when someone at school or work hurts you? How should you? How can the reality of God's grace, love, and favor help your endurance and faith in your circumstances?
12. How can you prepare your attitude and faith for suffering? When we are in Christ, no harm will come to us that is not allowed for a purpose. Knowing this, how can you further trust in Him and endure all that comes your way?