

**“The Endurance of Our Hope” Bible Studies for Life June 28, 2020**

When has your endurance really been tested?

- current pandemic
- listening to the news
- sitting in traffic
- your luggage was lost on an airline flight
- dealing with a difficult person
- standing in line at the grocery store
- waiting at the doctor’s office
- waiting for test results

Choosing to believe the promises of God sustains us through dark, difficult days. Our endurance is severely tested when problems persist for extended periods. Suffering can be physical, emotional, financial, or in many other ways.

Peter sought to encourage the believers in Asia Minor to stay faithful in the face of persecution. He pointed to their hope in Christ as motivation for staying faithful and included specific actions that God expects of His obedient children. He addresses how Christians should live.

**Today’s Point: We can endure suffering because of our hope in Christ.**

1 Peter 3:8-12 (NIV) Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 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. 10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. 11 They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. 12 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."

Peter names 5 ways in these verses that Christians should conduct themselves.

Like-minded – think alike about core doctrines and appropriate conduct within and outside the church setting.

Sympathetic – “to feel with” someone, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.”

Love one another – “loving one’s brother,” “show sincere brotherly love.”

Compassionate – “tenderhearted,” sensitive to the needs and opinions of others.

Humble – someone who has a healthy view of his own worth before God as well as that of other people. Consider others to be more important than yourself.

How are believers to respond to those who intend evil toward them?

- don’t pay back for bad things done to you
- don’t try to get revenge
- instead repay a bad deed with a good deed, a blessing

What advice from the Old Testament (Psalm 34:12 – 16) did Peter give?

- keep your tongue from evil – don't say bad things
- keep your lips from deceitful speech – don't lie
- turn away from evil, turn to doing good
- seek peace, pursue peace

What motivation does this Old Testament passage give for living this way?

- you will love life and see good days
- God watches and listens to the prayers of the righteous
- the face of the Lord is against those who do evil

What concrete actions can we use to promote harmony?

- reject every kind of evil and replace it with what is good
- seek peace and pursue it – we are to intentionally avoid contentious behavior
- remain faithful and obedient
- pray for those who aggravate you
- pray for God's mercy and grace to be at work in and through you
- claim the Fruit of the Spirit – allow God to live those qualities out through your life  
... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control
- smile at people you meet
- pray God's blessing on all you come in contact with

Next, we will be encouraged to always do what is good.

1 Peter 3:13-14 (NIV) Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened."

Because of sin, we all experience sufferings. Believers can be confident that God is with them and will help them through their trials. God is always watching the righteous and listening to their prayers. Nothing can separate us from His love for us in Christ (Romans 8:31 – 39). He never said we would not experience verbal or physical attacks. Regardless of our struggles, we still need to remain committed and devoted to God.

In what ways have you seen people suffer as a result of their faith in Christ?

- loss of a job for holding to a righteous standard
- arrested for preaching the Gospel
- loss of a friendship because one doesn't believe
- Christians are sometimes ridiculed by nonbelievers

How could suffering for doing right be a blessing?

- you learn a lesson in trusting God through the suffering
- you maintain your testimony for Jesus
- others are encouraged to do the right thing
- loss of job and God provides something better
- people see how we respond to the suffering and are made aware of the peace and joy we have
- our testimony helps others to hear the gospel message

We do not rejoice because we experience suffering, but we rejoice because of the good that comes from it. Paul and James assured believers that God would work through their suffering and enable them to grow in endurance and spiritual maturity. It also strengthens us to believe in God's faithfulness.

Peter said, "do not fear what they fear." What do you suppose "they" fear?

- physical pain
- being wrong
- lose the respect of others
- to be humiliated or experience public disgrace.

When do sufferings and difficulties give us the opportunity to share our faith?

- people will wonder how we handle our problems
- we can share God's sufficiency, God's power at work
- when we see someone else with a similar problem, we can share how God brought us through it

Always be ready to give a defense of the hope that we have in Jesus.

1 Peter 3:15-17 (NIV) 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. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17 For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

We can use our trials as opportunities to point others to the hope we have in Christ. Only when we are fully committed to honoring Jesus as Lord of our lives are we fully prepared to endure the suffering we may face as His disciples. Peter is saying that we should not argue with unbelievers, but we should be ready to share the hope that we have in Christ. We should be ready to speak in gentleness, respect and a clear conscience. We may not have all the answers to the questions an unbeliever may ask, but we should be able to provide an explanation of why we choose to follow Christ.

Why do you think Peter thought it was important to be ready to be able to respond to inquirers about hope?

- it's part of the Great Commission
- our lives are meant to point people to Christ
- how we live should demonstrate the change that salvation can make in our lives
- we also need to be able to verbalize what we believe and why

How do we begin to understand and to prepare to explain your hope in Christ?

- give thought to what you believe
- read and study God's Word
- practice sharing your testimony

## Application

Surrender.

- Choose to see your life and circumstances from God's perspective.
- Acknowledge the lordship of Christ and trust Him regardless of the actions of others.

Bless.

- Think about someone who may have treated you like an enemy.
- Consider if you have treated another person like an enemy
- For either situation, seek to bless that person with love, compassion, and humility.

Defend.

- Ask the Lord for opportunities to display and defend the hope that is in you.
- When the Lord opens that door, be ready to verbally testify of your hope in Christ.