

Suffering Solutions, part 5

1 Peter 3:8-12

(preached Pine Grove 11/10/19 Sun PM)

Introduction

In 1989, two brothers set out to start a tee shirt business.

They loaded up their Chrysler minivan with various t-shirts and started driving up and down the east coast selling their shirts.

However after 5 years, the business was going nowhere.

So in 1994 with less than \$100 to their names, they met with some friends in a Boston apartment.

Their goal was to get some feedback from their friends about their future.

However, instead of telling them to give up and get a real job, one of their friends noticed a drawing one their of original artwork.

It was the face of a smiling man with the simple phrase, “Life is good” placed below it.

The brothers used their last bit of money to get 48 shirts printed up with that original artwork.

They loaded them in their van and headed to a nearby street fair in Cambridge Massachusetts, where the 48 shirts sold out in less than an hour.

Just 13 years later, in 2007, the Life is Good brand reached annual sales of \$100 million dollars.

And now the Life is Good brand can be found on anything from tee shirts to beach umbrellas.

According to the brothers, their mom asked them every night at the dinner to share one good thing that happened to them that day.

And that had always stuck with them to the point that they simplified it to a simple slogan and the face of a happy man.

Here is a picture of that original tee shirt that grew into a multi-million dollar company.

Now, the slogan is easy to remember, but the reality of a the good life is harder to find.

Is life truly good?

Can you live the good life?

Well for starters, much must define the good life.

And that definition must come from Scripture not from the world because the world defines the good life usually in terms of wealth and fame and power

In most people's minds, the good life is seen in the lives of their favorite celebrities or athletes.

Yet, the Bible would not define the good life in those terms.

The good life is simply the ability to have a good day, to find contentment, to find peace, to find fulfillment, to find joy.

The good life is simply the ability to be at rest in the midst of a world that is never at rest.

But we all must admit that even that is hard to find for the believer.

It is hard to believe, but Christians struggle with loving life.

Depression, divorce, unhappiness plague even believers.

So how do find the good life?

Well, 1 Peter 3:8-12 is going to give the recipe for enjoying the good life..

I want to read it you.

Then we will go back and look at in more detail to make sure we understand all the ingredients to the good life..

Look, with me at 1 Peter 3:8-12..

8 [d]To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but [e]giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, Must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.

11

“He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it.

12

“For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Verse 10 serves as the main idea of these 5 verses..

The one who desires life, to love and see good days.

This is the issue at hand.

If you want to live and love life and see good days, then God is giving the recipe for that in the words that surround verse 10.

Now remember, the context is key to getting a proper understanding of the passage.

Peter doesn't jump into the middle of how to live the good life by accident here.

He is offering the recipe for enjoying life in the middle of a letter on Christian suffering.

And the point is simple.

Living the good life as a believer is not a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

Living the good life as a believer can happen in any setting at any time, provided we live the good life by the Lord's standards.

In fact, if you at our outline for tonight, these verses come at the end of a long section of how to live with excellent behavior in the world..

Remember, the initial readers of this letter were 1st century Christians living under intense persecution in the Roman Empire.

Nero was the emperor and he was a mad man that had it out for believers.

But God doesn't tell Peter to tell believers to fight back against Nero.

He doesn't tell believers to move away.

He doesn't tell believers to overthrow Nero.

He simply uses the pen of Peter to tell believers to suffer well.

And we have been blessed by the instruction.

Though we don't live under an anti-Christian government yet, we do suffer in various ways.

And when we suffer, we can look to 1 Peter for help.

In chapter 1, we learned to focus on our salvation in times of suffering.

Though trouble in our life is bad, it could be worse, we could be lost and headed to hell.

But we aren't.

Then God used to Peter to command us to guard our minds in times of suffering.

We aren't to let our minds run wild when we suffer.

Instead, we are told to gird up the loins of our mind.

Then we are told to focus on holiness and our sanctification as we suffer.

In other words, don't let the trouble in our life serve as an excuse to not be growing in Christlikeness.

Instead, respond to suffering with a renewed commitment to be more more obedient and more committed to Christ.

And then in chapter 2, verse 11, we began a section of this letter that moved from the inward side of responding to suffering to the outward side.

Yes, we must think with excellence but we suffer but we must also behave with excellence.

Look back at verse 11 and 12 of 1 Peter 2..

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among

the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may [n]because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of [o]visitation.

You see, it is tempting to lose all control when suffering.

It is tempting to think wrongly and also act wrongly, but God would say to us that suffering should lead us to think straight and act straight.

And so Peter uses the rest of chapter 2 and the first 12 verses of chapter 3 to outline how believers are to behave with excellence in the world.

And that behavior could be summed up with one word, -submission.

In other words, when the world isn't fair to us, we don't demand our way or make our way.

We submit and trust the Lord.

And Peter has given us 4 general areas of life that the believer is called to submission in.

The first area is submission to government and we noted that Christians aren't to be known as rebels and protesters against the government that God has put over us.

Thought these 1st century Christians may have been justified in taking up arms and fighting against Nero, they were called to submit to Him.

The second area of submission that we covered was the workplace.

Peter addressed servants masters in verse 18-20 and the command was the same, -submit to authorities at work.

And then 2 weeks ago, we looked at a 3rd area of submission and that is submission in the family.

Wives submit to husband's leaderships and husbands submit to the wife's needs.

And the point of this submission to government, to bosses, to family member is to win unbelievers to the Lord.

Submissive citizens can win their kings and governors to the Lord.

Submissive workers can win their bosses to the Lord.

Submissive wives and husbands can win their spouses to the Lord.

But there is one final area of submission for the Christian to consider and that is submission in the church.

And this is the context of verses 8-12.

If you want to get the most out of life, submit to government, submit to bosses, submit in your family, and submit in your relationship to other believers.

Now with all that background out of the way, let's begin this section tonight.

The outline point for these verses is the Expectations for the Church.

And the expectation for the church is to live with excellent behavior, and when you do, you will know the good life for the believer.

So let's look at 7 keys to the good life.

7 expectations for excellent behavior in the church.

Key #1 is found in verse 8..

We will call this..

A. Live the Good Life with Character (8)

I have to warn you before we get started because we may not get farther than verse 8, since it has a full description of what the character of the Christian should be..

Let's read the verse again..

8 [d]To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

Peters begins verse 8 letting us that this is a summary of what has proceeded this verse..

And as we noted the preceding verses are description of excellent behavior for the Christian citizen, for the Christian employee, and for the Christian spouse..

But now we come to some general expectation for all believers in the world.

And the first character quality is that all Christians should be harmonious.

The Greek word here is homophrones, and this is the only time it is used in the NT.

Homo means “same” and phrone is related to the mind or thinking..

In other words, believers are to be of one mind.

We think and believe the same way.

There is unity of thought among Christians.

Now, that doesn't mean that we will agree on all things.

But it means that Christians are agreeable with one another.

We don't squabble.

WE don't create division.

We seek agreement on most things, and disagree with love and respect.

Sadly, the church has often reflected just the opposite.

Christians in churches fighting over the pettiest of issues.

Christians getting mad at one another and leaving churches.

Now some of that can be chalked up to the truth that not everyone who calls himself is in fact a Christian.

Sometimes church squabbles are unbelievers fighting with unbelievers under the cover of Christianity.

Sometime those squabbles are unbelievers in the church showing their true colors of unbelief.

Ultimately, Christians are harmonious people.

We can lay aside differences in order to preserve unity and maintain our witness to the world.

Believer, you are called to be harmonious in our interaction with others.

You are called to share the same mind as other believers, and look that is possible because we belong to same God and read the same truth.

If you find yourself always out of step and disagreeing with other believers, it may not be them, it may be you.

And it may be that you are not reading enough of the God's truth which creates unity and not division.

A second character trait of the believer is sympathy.

Now this is not just a sadness for other people.

This is to share in the sufferings of others.

It is hard to sympathize from your living room couch.

Sympathy is the result of beside alongside someone and sharing in their troubles.

To be sympathetic is to identify with someone, and look we all know the difficulty of this world.

We don't have all the same experiences of suffering, but we have all suffered.

WE have all also seen the power of sin and felt the consequences of sin.

And that should make us all sympathetic to anyone who is suffering.

Let me tell you something.

When you see someone in need, your first thought is often that they put themselves into this position by their own doing.

And let me save you the trouble, they probably are suffering due their own sinful choices.

But let me also tell you this.

That is no reason to withhold sympathy.

Guess what?

When God came to you with the gospel, you were suffering due to your own sin, but thankfully, God still showed sympathy to you.

Do you know what the opposite of sympathy is?

It is sitting in a position of judgment above others.

Sadly, the church has become just that.

Now that doesn't mean we excuse or justify sin, it simply means that we expose sin but come along the sinner with sympathy and truth.

May God help us all to be people of sympathy.

A third character trait of the believer is to be brotherly.

The Greek word is philadelphoi, from where we get Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love.

Without questions, Christians with excellent behavior are known for their love of one another.

Way back in chapter 1, Peter wrote this.

1 Peter 1:22.

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

And when we examined that verse, we noted the need for believers to love in a way that stretches them.

That is what fervent love is.

It is a love that goes beyond what we think we can do or should do.

There is no doubt that excellent Christian behavior is marked by love for other believers..

You will not find the good life if you do first love others.

A 4th characteristic of Christian behavior is kindheartedness.

Your translation may say tender hearted.

But this is the idea of compassion and having pity.

The Greek word here is eusplanchnoi, and it comes from a Greek word used to describe the collection of internal organs.

It speaks of an emotion for others that is so strong it affects you physically.

It is the idea of heart felt emotion for others.

The opposite would be someone who is detached from others.

Doesn't care for the needs or situations of others.

Christians care about others.

We are compassionate and kindhearted.

WE are tender hearted.

Men often struggle in this area as it is seen as a negative quality, but I can assure that the Man of all men, Jesus, was tenderhearted.

He cried when he looked over Jerusalem and the people who would die in their sin by rejecting him.

He hung on the cross but felt compassion for his earthly mother that he put her in the care of John.

Jesus was a man's man but he cared deeply for the plight of others.

He was tenderhearted and compassionate, and we must be the same as His people.

The fifth character trait of the Christian is simple but powerful.

Christians are called to be humble.

As I have the Bible like never before in these past 5 years of preparing and preaching sermons, I am overwhelmed at how often the Bible speaks of the value of humility.

Over and over again in the OT and NT, the humble are rewarded and used by God while the proud find trouble.

Humility of mind is rare trait in a proud culture.

WE live in social media age where pride is put into pictures and words on Facebook and Twitter and Instagram.

WE live in a culture that exalts self and pride is seen as a virtue.

Yet, God has not changed and his word is still true as ever which says that HE opposes the proud but gives grace to humble.

This is really the character trait that unlocks the door to rest of them.

If you want to be like-minded, be humble first.

If you want to be sympathetic, be humble first.

If you want to love others, be humble first.

IF you want to be compassionate, be humble.

Excellent Christian behavior begins with humility.

And verse is clear.

The good life for the believer begins with godly character and attitude.

You will never experience the good life with good character.

Instead of looking for everything around you to change and bring the good life, how about you change first and maybe everything around you will be less important.

If you want to live the good life and see days, focus on your Christian character first.

The second key to the good life is found in the first half of verse 9..

We will call this..

B. Live the Good Life with Control (9a)

A simple verse to read but a difficult verse to practice..

Verse 9.

9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult,

As we put on Christian character, we must also exercise Christian self-control.

Our call, our command from the Lord is the not return evil for evil or insult for insult.

Christians are not people of retaliation or revenge.

WE don't respond in the same wicked way that we are treated.

Just in case you want to ignore Peter here, let me offer a few more verses that teach exactly the same thing.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

Romans 12:14;17-21

14 Bless those who persecute [m]you; bless and do not curse.

17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. [Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but [p]leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Then finally...

Matthew 5:38-45

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take your [am]shirt, let him have your [an]coat also. 41 Whoever [ao]forces you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may [ap]be sons of your Father who is in heaven;

Sadly, more Christians practice an eye for an eye toward their enemy than practicing love and offering prayer for their enemy.

Look, an eye for eye is still true but that power resides with the government to punish.

It does not reside with the individual believer to practice.

Our practice is one of forgiveness and prayer and love even in the face of incredible evil.

Listen to me Christian..

In terms of your enemy,...

Your mission is not to get justice.

Your mission is not to live vindicated

Your mission is not to get the last word.

Your mission is to turn the other cheek to your enemy, offer your last coat to the enemy, go above and beyond with forgiveness granted to the enemy, love the enemy, and pray for the enemy.

There is no wiggle room.

There are no exceptions.

Jesus knows exactly how you are being treated, and Jesus expects that you will exactly obey what he has said.

Period. End of story.

It is not complicated.

You are simply called to obey the commands to not return evil for evil and insult for insult.

Excellent Christian behavior means that we exercise self control in dealing with all people, even the wicked ones.

And let me assure you that you will not the good life always trying to make sure your enemies suffer.

In fact, that is the miserable life because you end up becoming just like the person who is attacking you.

If you ever hope to win your enemy to Christ, it starts with forgiveness and long-suffering not insults and evil.

Well, let's stop there for tonight.

That is a lot to take in and digest.

So let's end with a little summary..

Conclusion

#1 - Christians are submissive to one another.

For the past few weeks, submission has been stressed in the world, in the workplace, and in the family.

But it also applies in the church.

WE don't come to church to get our way at the expense of others.

WE come with like mindedness.

WE come with sympathetic and tender hearts.

WE come in humility.

And when we do that, the church is blessed.

The church is at rest, and the church is at peace.

Everywhere we turn as believers, we are called to submit, and that includes our submission to one another.

#2 - Christians are forgiving of all.

The temptation to return evil for evil and insult for insult is born of the flesh.

IT is not from God.

If it were from God, we would all be in trouble.

You see if God returned evil for evil, no one would be exempt from his wrath.

If you are tempted to get revenge...

If you are tempted to retaliate..

Simply take a moment to remind yourself of God's great forgiveness of you.

Simply put, if the God of Scripture operated on the same principle of evil for evil, how long would you have lasted?

And I will answer for you.

You wouldn't have lasted a moment.

However, God is slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness.

And while we committed evil after evil against Him, praise the Lord that he didn't return that evil to us.

Instead, he forgave and and forgave and forgave.

The good life won't be found in retaliation, but it will be found in forgiveness and long-suffering.

May God grant us the ability to act in the same that HE acted toward us.

Let us pray.

C. Live the Good Life with Charity (9b)

D. Live the Good Life with a Clamp (10)

E. Live the Good Life with Conviction (11a)

F. Live the Good Life with Calmness (11b)

G. Live the Good Life with Cognizance (12)