

“Facing Suffering”

1 Peter 3.18-22

- Last week’s concluding verse [1 Peter 3.17] says “*is better to suffer for doing good, ... than for doing evil*”. I suggested that this is self evident, but I want to “retract.” Actually it can be really hard to suffer for doing good because it is unjust.
- 1 Peter 3.18-22 [p1016] Concerns: how to face unjust suffering/opposition
- We may face opposition that is cultural, Institutional, or personal.
- Context: Peter’s readers faced all these and more: AND in their lifetime> full-blown, state-sanctioned attempt to eradicate: intimidation, torture, death

Big Idea: You can face unjust opposition by considering Jesus.

1. Consider how Jesus endured unjust suffering. [18]

- When you face opposition for your faith - consider how your master Jesus endured unjust suffering [vs18]. No one has suffered greater or more unjustly than Jesus. The gospels reveal Jesus suffered greatly but remained: faithful to mission, compassionate, humble, courageous.
- Considering how Jesus endured suffering is the cure for our tendency to “**battle**”
- Notice what we can learn from the Jesus’ suffering. **His suffering was...**
- **Temporary: *suffered once*** (“at one time”, “once for all”)
- **Purposeful: *for sins*** - Jesus’ suffering atoned for the sins of humanity
- **Unjust: *the righteous for the unrighteous*** - next time you want to go on a rampage because you’ve been slighted > consider: Jesus unjustly bore *your* sin
- **Personal: *that he might bring us to God*** - He endured the unthinkable to bring you & I into close relationship with God.
**What are you willing to endure so others can be reconciled to God?
- During lent through Good Friday: we reflect on Jesus’ suffering & death BUT that is only half the story: Easter! (As Tony Campolo & S.M. Lockrige proclaimed)
“**It’s Friday but Sunday’s coming!**”

18... being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

- Before elaborating on the “glory” Peter gives two “pictures” to consider:

Like Noah [19-20]

- Martin Luther: “**This is as strange a text and enigmatic a saying as there is anywhere in the New Testament, so that I do not yet know exactly what St. Peter means**” (Luther’s Works 12.367)
- Details may be fuzzy/debated (imprisoned spirits, etc) BUT main point is clear:
Like Noah, the ones who endured opposition were the ones who were ultimately delivered.
- For decades, Noah’s neighbors derided & mocked AND
For decades, Noah trusted God and stayed on mission

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- In the end: Noah & family alone were saved...entered a new world
- **POINT:** keep enduring like Noah!

Like baptism [21]

- Water baptism in early church...
- **1) by immersion** - [Rom 6.3-4] reveals symbolism
- **2) Nearly synonymous with profession of faith** (bap. doesn't save but it was more closely tied with the salvation event than often is today)
- **Like Baptism, you surrender to going under because you trust you will emerge. (Baptism is public statement of your commitment to follow Jesus come-what-may, trusting that because of the resurrection, you will be raised to new life come-what-may.)**
- POINT: When you face opposition - take a deep breath anticipating glory
> "Glory" is the second thing to consider about Jesus...

2. Consider how Jesus triumphed over unjust suffering.[22]

- [v22] Jesus did not simply "make it through suffering", He gloriously triumphed.
> all the powers of evil in heaven and on earth have been **subjected to him**.
- Robert Mounce, NAC summarizes whole paragraph (18-22)
Peter argued that Christ also traveled the pathway from suffering to glory. Suffering, then, is not a sign of divine displeasure. Precisely the opposite. Those who suffer for the Christ will be glorified as he was.
- The way Christ **endured** - addresses our tendency to **battle**.
The way Christ **triumphed** - addresses our tendency to **blend/bunker** (fear)
- Everett Harrison, rEBC "[Peter] wishes to comfort his audience with the reassurance that **(1) Christ is their "captain," the one who went before them and also suffered, and (2) there is nothing in the cosmos that remains outside the conquest and reign of Christ.**
- Our captain has gone before us both in suffering and triumphant glory!
- Jesus did not start a movement, then die, and disappear (like every other leader of a movement). ...He rose! And invites us to follow him!
- He suffered, died, AND triumphed gloriously! [1 Cor 15.4-6 Phil 2.8-11]
- No matter what you are going through - you can face it by keeping your eyes on Jesus.
- Two Questions:
 - **1) Where do you feel opposition?** (cultural, institutional, personal)
 - **2) What is your reaction?** (Battle, Blend, Bunker)
- Remember Stephen (first recorded martyr as Jesus follower)
Q: How did Stephen endure persecution with grace, courage, compassion?
A: [Acts 7.55-56] He endured by fixing his eyes on Jesus.
- Whatever you are facing...

CHALLENGE: Look to Jesus!