

Book	1-Peter
Study	Study 11
Topic	Suffering for Righteousness Sake
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Toddlers have their own rules. There is like a whole set of laws just for toddlers and the following now are the property laws for toddlers. It goes like this:

- If I like it, it is mine.
- If it is in my hand, it is mine.
- If I can take it from you, it is mine.
- If I had it a little while ago, it is mine.
- If it is mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
- If I am doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
- If it looks just like mine, it is mine.
- If I saw it first, it is mine.
- If you are playing with something and you put it down, automatically it becomes mine.
- If it is broken, it is yours.

You know my friends, as followers of Jesus Christ the watch word isn't 'mine', it is 'yours'. Not me but you, not self but others. Let me tell you where I am coming from. Back in the year 1744 there was a saying that was attributed to Benjamin Franklin. He was one of the founding fathers of the United States of America and the saying goes something like this,

"You'll catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar."

The point of this is simply, when you have a sweeter approach and nicer approach, you are going to be more successful in winning people over than if you were just mean or bad-tempered. The entire section that we have been studying here, beginning at chapter 2 verse 11, all the way to where we are today, we have been dealing with how we as transformed believers live our lives on the stage of the world. Most of us have heard this saying before.

You are the only Bible that some people will ever read.

It can be a bit cliché and it can be wrongly applied but is there any doubt my friends in your minds this evening that our lives are on open display and people are watching, whether you know it or not. The unbelieving world is watching very

carefully and it could be that the way that we live our lives actually attracts people around us to the faith potentially.

1 Peter 3:8-12

"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Now let me bring back to where we are at studying these last weeks. Peter has been talking about three major areas of social interaction.

1. In society; our relationship to the government.
2. At the workplace, our relationship to our employer or employees.
3. In the homes, husbands and wives and their relationship to one another.

That's what we have been kind of talking about these last few weeks and we've also noted that Peter says the general characteristic for all of us in all these roles can be summed up by one word, which is 'submission to authority'. Here in verse 8, he turns his attention from our attitude to those who are not in the faith, to our attitude towards those who are in the faith, the church. My friends, your evangelism and your living for the sake of the gospel witness to unbelievers will be empty if you do not love fellow believers. Your witness to those outside the church will be hollow if you do not love those inside the church. Imagine my friends on Sunday morning, if the ushers welcomed you and then said, I am not going in there, I don't even like those people, it doesn't work like that.

Now that is because Peter is transitioning from submission to suffering, here in this text. You will see in this chapter that a prerequisite for suffering well is a community that does not allow you to suffer alone. A precondition for you to suffer well is if you are in a community like FBC that doesn't allow you to go through something painful in your life alone. In the second century AD there was a guy by the name of Tertullian. He was actually a church historian and he said this about the Roman government. He was very suspicious of churches because they were growing so rapidly that he eventually sent spies to the church to see what was up. One of the spies came back and this is what he reported,

"These Christians are very strange people. They meet in an empty room to worship. They have no image. They speak of one by the name of Jesus, who is absent, but whom they seem to be expecting at any moment."

The report doesn't end there. He goes on to say this,

"And my, how they love him and how they love one another."

By that one sentence, does that describe the FBC, I leave that for you to answer. What a compelling, what an attractive testimony to be able to see in the lives of believers. So let's dive into the text

8 "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Now we have something called a fivefold description of a believer in Jesus Christ. Now in the context of a local church and I am going to very quickly or very briefly this evening unravels each of these quickly for you. These fivefold descriptions can be summed up in one word, which is 'love'. Just like Jesus Christ summed up the whole law in one word 'love' and so our relationships with one another in this church should be summed up by one word 'love'.

So let's consider the first one, **unity of mind**. What this means is to be like-minded. Now just think about this for a second, is that possible to be like minded? No. You know, what most of you define likeminded as, you agreeing with me that's what it means. I think this and you should agree with that. My friend that's not unity, that is called uniformity and the Bible no matter where you look will never call us to be uniform in that sense. There are differences amongst us. There are difference of opinions amongst us. If we right here now open up a discussion on politics or on styles of clothing or on what shows on television are appropriate to watch or what styles of Christian music are appropriate to listen to or play in church, we would open up a can of worms as they say and we would all have a huge disagreement. That is what happens. It is just the way we are. Why? Because we don't necessarily agree on everything. One very smart individual said this,

"If two people agree on everything, one of them isn't thinking."

The early church my friends didn't always agree. There were disagreements. There were arguments and there were divisions among things like meat sacrificed to idols, keeping the sabbath, on which days were appropriate to worship over which widows in the church would the church support financially. Paul and Barnabas argued over John Mark. The twelve apostles argued about who would be greatest in the kingdom. That's right. People argued all the time. Another person said this,

"The church is a lot like Noah's ark, were it not for the flood on the outside, you sometimes couldn't stand the stench on the inside."

Speaking of the church. That's because we are fallen people, gathered together to be likeminded. Now listen to me, we don't all have to think alike but we do have to have one mind. Having one mind I would describe as this, cooperation in the midst of diversity. That's what one mind is.

Think of the human body. The very example that the apostle Paul used of the church, the body of Christ. There are different parts that do different operations. There is a diversity but there is a cooperation in that diversity and that is a very thing that Jesus Christ himself prayed for. If you look at John 17:21

Father that they may be one, even as you and I are one. That the world may believe that you have sent me.

Speaking of unity. Being likeminded my friends, doesn't mean that you become a clone. This does happen but it happens in cults but is not so in Christianity. In a cult my friends, everyone thinks the same thing, everyone whatever the cult leader teaches is what people will believe. The operative principle in a cult is conformity. The operative principle in Christianity is harmony. It is a musical term. There is harmony amongst us. We all don't look the same, we all don't dress the same but there is a harmony amongst us. So to put it to you practically, the church can be viewed as an orchestra. In an orchestra, there are different instruments playing different parts and if everyone played his or her own thing, it will be a mess, it will be a catastrophe. My friends, when everybody plays his or her part following the instructions of the conductor, they make beautiful music. My friends, the conductor of this church is Jesus himself and when you and I play our part and follow him, we make beautiful music.

My friends, Jesus takes our differences and make something beautiful. This evening live in community with one another, not in isolation, not in our own private areas. Friends, unity in the church means that we have all the same aim of serving God and loving one another. Serving the God that made us different, now how do we keep this unity of mind. It is simple, the apostle Paul puts it beautifully. In Ephesians chapter 4 verse 3 he says this,

Eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace

As we together in this community, as we walk with Christ, the Holy Spirit supernaturally works inside of us to produce unity amongst us, not uniformity. Lets consider the second list on 1-Peter 3:8 and that is sympathy. Sympathy is a Greek word, 'sumpathés' and it has two words that it is made up of and if you breakdown those two words. It is broken down into syn which means "together" and pathos which means "feeling". When you put these two words together, it literally means to feel the same thing. In Romans 12:15 Paul says,

"Rejoice with those that rejoice, weep with those that weep."

You know, what it means to be sympathetic, I thought about this for a while and I thought the best way to illustrate sympathy is the way people drive in the third world. In Sri Lanka most highways have two lanes and wait for the offices to open

and suddenly there will be five lanes. It is a thing in Sri Lanka. This not happens once in a while, it happens like a ritual every day. In Sri Lanka traffic signs and lights are never obeyed and that's putting it lightly, but one thing is very noticeable. In the midst of the apparent chaos, every driver is aware of what the other driver is doing. When one car veers to the side to avoid a motorbike, all the other cars move as well. My friends, this is the way Christians should be, sensitive to what is going around them. That's what it means to be sympathetic. Not having spiritual myopia where you only see your needs, but you are sympathetic, you are aware of what is going around you. 1-Cor 12:26 says this,

If one member of the body suffers, we all suffer. If one member is honored, we are all honored together.

That is what it means to be sympathetic, to feel together. To feel for one another together.

Third on our list is **brotherly love**. This comes from the Greek word 'Philia' means close friendship or brotherly love. It is one of the four types of love in the Bible. So the concept of brotherly love is one that unites believers in Christianity. As members of the body of Christ we are a family in a very special sense. Christians are members of one family, the body of Christ. God is our father, you are my brother, and you are my sister. That is what a church is. We ought to have a warm and devoted love for one another in this church that catches the interest of the unbelievers outside the church. Don't expect people to walk in here supernaturally, they have to see something different to what they see out there. This is what generally happens. People get curious. So this word, philia, is a close union of love amongst Christians and it is only seen by people in the members of a natural family. If you actually have physical brothers and sisters, this is what it means, but believers in a church are a family not in the conventional sense.

This unique expression of love ought to be so attractive my dear friends that it draws people to the church. I can't help when I was studying this text this past week. I can't help but imagine that Peter had his own brother, Andrew, in mind when he was writing this. You know, Andrew was a great brother. He was a loving brother. He was the one that led Peter to Jesus Christ, so my friends love one another as these brothers loves. It is one of the best measuring sticks to see if one is truly born again and it is love. We can have all the fanciest theological terms flowing out of our mouth, we can have the nicest methodologies in our ministries in the church, we can do all of that, we can even have pretty slides going on here, but my friends if your life is not characterized by loving one another, your efforts in this church is futile. That's the truth.

1 John 4:20

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

The fourth thing in our agenda today is **a tender heart**. It is a very difficult word to translate because the original Greek word for a number of reasons is very hard to pronounce. I believe it says "Splanchnos" and it actually means your intestines / your guts, and a literal translation of this word means to have good bowels. That's what it says and here is why it says as because a couple of thousands years ago in the ancient world it was believed that the deepest emotions that a person feels is in the intestine region. We tend to say things like these, hey so what is your gut saying or man I feel it in my gut. My friends, the deepest emotions are felt in the intestine region, so even though it is very hard to translate this word, it would be better put across like this, you must be deeply concerned for others, not surface but deeply concerned for others.

The fifth word is a **humble mind**. Do you know why this is such a shocking statement? I'll tell you. Because when Peter wrote this in the Greco-Roman era, being or having a humble mind was not considered a virtue. It was actually considered a weakness. Because only weak people are humble people. They say that when the Greeks conquered people, they turned them into humble minded people. You know the Greeks loved qualities like self-confidence, self-esteem, self-assertiveness. They would have loved Clint Eastwood. Humility my friends is the grace that keeps the gears of relationships running smoothly. Baptist pastor and D. L. Moody's best friend, F. B. Meyer said this,

"I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other, and the taller you grow in Christian grace, the more easily you could take them. I have now come to realize that God's gifts are on shelves---one below the other. And it's not a matter of growing taller, but of stooping lower."

How many of us view ourselves like that in the church? So now Paul covered these five qualities and more in this passage of Christ like behavior.

Philippians 3:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

So now it gets harder because now we are going to go to verse 9 where he is turning from people who are nice to you to people who are not very nice to you. So what do you do if someone you know is very grumpy? What do you do if you know that someone tries to insult you or hurt you in some way? When I was growing up which is the 90s, one of my favorites movies was Rambo. One of the most famous lines from the end of the movie was when Rambo he single handedly destroys an

entire town, destroys all the corrupt police force behind the attacks and then one of the officers asked Rambo why he did this. He said, 'they drew first blood.'

In other words, they hurt me first so now I have to hurt in return. That's what it means. If someone hurts me then I have the right to get even. The problems today is like that, many Christians think more like Rambo than Jesus Christ. We think that if someone hurts us we have to retaliate. There is no other way forward. We all can relate to this. My friends, it is not too difficult to display these qualities in verse 8. When we are in the company of equally loving, equally compassionate, equally humble people in the church, we can all have unity and sympathy, but what happens when someone is not that way. Think about it? These are good questions for us to ask ourselves.

You know the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor, this is the audience that 1-Peter 3 was actually written to. They were in the company of antagonistic pagans, people that didn't care much, they were very insulting and they were being insulted by their neighbors. They were being insulted by their masters and spouses, that was what was going on and Peter's advice here is that they should not respond to evil with evil or reviling with reviling. Paul gave them identical instructions in 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 5:15

"See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone."

You know my friends, in the honor and shame culture that we have in Asia, a person could increase his or her honor by insulting and putting down another person. This is what happens in a honor and shame culture. Peter here did not want the people to get caught in this very toxic cycle. He didn't want that to happen. So Peter reminded his readers in 1-Peter 2:23

He did not retaliate, when he was reviled he did not reviled in return, when he suffered he did not threatened but continued in trusting himself to him who judges justly.

Lets look at the last part of our lesson today

1 Pet. 3:9

"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."

The Greek word used here is 'eulogia' is the word we get "eulogy" from. It literally means a "good word", but it also means "blessing" in a broader sense. We need to be very careful with our friends. We need to be able to control what we say and take care that we don't speak maliciously, that we don't speak hurtful and deceitful words. You know my friends, a Christian community today in 2019 like the church

here, needs to be an alternative society where believers should not have to face the same kinds of insults and hostility that you face outside the church. It shouldn't happen inside the church. So Paul gives us a reason why Christians can respond to hurtful and slanderous words by saying good things because we have been called to obtain a blessing. We have been called to obtain a eulogia that we can overlook our present hardships and the dishonor because of our future joy of being in God's presence for eternity. That's the blessing. The new latest BMW is not the blessing, the nicest house on the edge of the street is not the blessing. The blessing if you are truly born again in this room is the joy of being with your creator God in eternity forever. That's the blessing and not what we can get in this temporal life that we know too well.

Peter backs up this point by quoting Psalm 34. In fact, 1-Peter 3:9-12 is actually Psalm 34

12Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,
13keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.
14Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.
15The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry;
16but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth.

The Christians in Asia Minor who this letter was written to, they were at breaking point. They were even thinking of retaliating because of all the insults that they were receiving but Peter tells them, through this passage in Psalm 34, to restrain their tongue, to hold themselves. He assures them that God sees them and hears their prayers in their current situations. My friends, God is on their side, that is what has been communicated in Psalm 34, God is concerned for their welfare and conversely God is against all those who are doing them harm and so the context of Psalm 34 is David's exile from Judah. In the midst of such pain and suffering, God was with him and God was watching over him. So Peter uses this context to encourage the Christians in Asia Minor who were facing a similar situation, to assure them God was with them.

I have discovered that all of history hinges on one pivotal event and that is the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. That's the one event in human history, that's the main event, his death, his burial and his eventual resurrection. Why is that? Because forgiveness is our greatest need and our greatest need happens to be Jesus's greatest accomplishment. Our greatest need in this life happens to be Jesus's greatest accomplishment. Our greatest need in this life is not how to live the best life now, or not to be the healthiest person that we can be. This is why Jesus said on the cross, father forgive them for they know not what they do. It is forgiveness. The great Bible scholar William Evans said this,

You can take your Bible and you can take a knife and you can cut it anywhere and it will start bleeding.

What he meant was, the atonement of Jesus Christ is on every page, on every book in your Bible, on your page in your Bible, in every chapter and verse in your Bible the gospel, the work of Jesus Christ, the atonement of Christ is either anticipated, it is either acknowledged or it is either celebrated. On every single page in your Bible, it is all about Jesus Christ.

There were three crosses that were prepared by Romans for three criminals. On two of those crosses, thieves were to be hung. On the third cross, on guilty of treason against the Roman Empire whose name was Barabbas, but Barabbas never made it to the cross. You see, sentence was passed on Barabbas. He was found guilty by the Romans, but he never made it to the cross. Why? Because somebody took his place and on that middle cross or on that middle cross that day hung not Barabbas but the sinless perfect son of God, Jesus Christ. Barabbas went free but he didn't go free because he was innocent, he went free because someone said I got this, and he walked up onto the cross. My friend, that's the atonement of Jesus Christ. Take that home with you, allow that to encourage you this evening, the atonement of Jesus Christ. He goes free because someone else hangs in his place and my friends when you have set that in your heart this evening, you have understood the gospel. Someone today stands in your place.

For those of us who are saved in this room, we see that God has set a very high standard of conduct as we saw in 1-Peter 3 verse 8, a very high standard of conduct. It is indeed an impossible standard but it can be accomplished through his grace. We are to manifest the mind of Christ and to bless and to seek to bless those who harm us. We are to bless those or we have to be a blessing to those in this world, even our enemies, knowing that our greatest blessing is salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

No matter where you are in your life, the greatest blessing you will ever inherit in this life is salvation in no other name than in Jesus Christ by his blood and because of that you live eternity with your creator God. This is our future reality if you are a born again believer. This salvation is a future reality but a present possession. Live as a transformed people. If the goal of this church was uniformity then I can see many different people in different clicks but the goal is not uniformity, the goal is unity and we are united not because we get along with people, we are united because we don't come from the same place or the same social status or from the same companies or same social circuit, we are united under the gospel of Jesus Christ and so may God give us the grace to understand and apply these precious words in 1-Peter chapter 3.