

1Peter 2:20
Women's Bible Study
March 16th, 2022

1Peter 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer [for it] you patiently endure it, this [finds] favor with God.

Peter continues to expand on the necessary behaviors for a believer. Beginning in verse 1 of this chapter, the apostle started with a contrast of actions which should be laid aside and those which should be desired. He reminded the church of their relationship with Jesus and the example they had to follow. He encouraged their focus to be on their future security in Christ. They were God's chosen people, called by grace because of His mercy. Therefore, since their citizenship was in heaven, they were to act in a way which was worthy of that call. Their lives were to be a witness of God's mercy and grace. Their submission to authority was required; their humility was to be representative of Christ's example. Why? Because in following Jesus, who was perfect and yet demanded nothing, a believer brings glory to God. Out of a heart of gratitude for eternal salvation, we can choose to live according to the knowledge and understanding given in the Word – even if we suffer unjustly on this earth.

In verse 20, we have a further explanation of enduring for Christ's sake. There is a stark contrast in the reasons noted for suffering. First, there is the suffering we bring upon ourselves for wrong choices, then there is receiving harsh treatment when it is entirely undeserved. You can imagine the latter is more difficult than the former.

Consider how challenging it is to be quiet and remain humble when you are accused falsely. This has probably happened to everyone at one time or another. Often, our first reaction is to make an argument for ourselves, to justify our behavior and to explain our position. Think of the accusations thrown at Jesus. He absolutely deserved no evil word or thought against Him – He was and is our perfect God. Yet, what was His response? A heart of humility which still considered the salvation even of those who had crucified Him. He asked His Father's forgiveness for their sake. Jesus was entirely innocent, 100% perfect, yet was willing to suffer unjust and cruel punishment out of obedience to His Father.

Matthew 26:67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him,

Mark 14:65 And some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps [in the face.]

Christ did not argue the Gospel, He presented it to all who would hear. Our charge is not to defend Christ nor the church nor even ourselves, but to give an answer for what we believe in order to make disciples. God does not need us to prove His righteousness; He has called us to be holy as an example of His holiness. In John 14:15 Jesus says, "If

you love Me, you will keep My commandments”. Our representation of who Christ is and all He has said and done, should give glory to Him.

Be willing to ask yourself this question: *Does my representation of Jesus give Him honor?*

Back up to 1 Peter 2:15, “For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men”. At times, this involves suffering. Our natural temptation is to justify ourselves. We readily explain why we are right, and we challenge those who treat us unfairly. In our country, we loudly proclaim our rights, we expect our freedoms, in fact, we demand to be treated fairly according to our own definition of what is fair. This is the opposite of patiently enduring under harsh treatment. According to one commentary, it is probable that the individuals who had converted to Christianity at the time of this letter, were suffering at the hands of their masters because they no longer joined them in idol worship. They were being mistreated because they had been called to follow Jesus.

Unfortunately, it may be in our future to be mistreated because we do not adhere to popular thinking on areas of abortion and what constitutes a marriage. *How will you handle harsh treatment? Will you endure it with patience?*

1Corinthians 4:11-12 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

Look at the question in 1 Peter 2:20 again, “What kind of merit is there when you are punished for your sin, and you quietly accept it?” The answer is *none!* We all sin. Sometimes we make deliberate choices to sin. Say you are in a hurry and decide that since the road is clear that you can hedge on a stop sign – ‘the rolling stop’. If there is an officer nearby you will be pulled over and receive a ticket; or if there are cameras and your picture is taken, you will receive a notice by mail. You’ve been caught and hopefully you willingly accept the penalty even though the amount of your ticket may put a significant dent in your budget. In this case, the punishment is deserved. You will get little to no sympathy for your error.

In the gospel of Luke we find a similar principle to the one contained in 1 Peter 2:20. Luke 6:32, “And if you love those who love you, what credit is [that] to you? For even sinners love those who love them”. There is behavior that is simply expected out of basic kindness for one another. Think of a child saying, ‘Mommy, I shared my cookie with so and so because they shared their cookie with me’, contrasted with, ‘Mommy, I shared my cookie with so and so even though they had nothing to give me’. Which takes greater effort?

Accepting consequences for bad choices, showing kindness to those who treat you well, being polite to those who are polite in return, are reasonably easy behaviors. Turn these scenarios around and this is when we need to buffet our flesh – being shamed for the right choices, showing kindness to those who treat you harshly, being polite to someone who mocks or is rude. Our response in the flesh is to prove ourselves, to share harsh words and fight.

When Peter addressed the Christians who had been dispersed, they were a minority, and many had left their Jewish faith of upholding the law. This alone caused separation and suffering. Imagine leaving an entire culture and its practices. These Christians then found themselves in fellowship with other Christians who had formerly been disdained because of their heathenism and idolatry practices. You can imagine the motley crew they were! From a worldly perspective, this group of 'new' Christians was an upset to those around them, and as a result they were treated unfairly, and even persecuted, because of their faith, because they were doing what was right in God's sight. They were a threat to tradition and what had been widely accepted.

How difficult is it to keep silent and allow others to treat you unfairly when it is undeserved?

It is understood and accepted that when we err, miss the mark, sin, or offend, we should be willing to suffer the consequences. If I steal something from a store, get caught and must pay a fine I am getting what I deserve. However, the Bible tells us that if we suffer for doing right, specifically in the case of representing our faith, we should be patient and endure that also.

Matthew 5:10-12 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when [men] cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Why would we choose to endure difficulty with a quiet spirit? – Because it finds favor with God. It is not the punishment or ill-treatment that gives God glory, it is my response in seeking to follow His instruction and example. The verses in Matthew 5 are not a call to make oneself a martyr. We do not need to seek persecution for our faith, but if and when it presents itself, we are to respond properly. This is a repetition of the precepts we have been studying for several weeks.

1Peter 2:18-19 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this [finds] favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

Our obedience and submission gives God glory. Consider again how difficult it is to bear up under unjust treatment. *Under these circumstances, who are you caused to trust? Who becomes your strength and purpose? What happens to your focus?* Often, these opportunities cause our reliance upon God to deepen. Our dependence on Him proves our faith. When we go to God with hearts of humility, understanding our need, and seeking comfort in Him, He is glorified.

Further along in 1 Peter, chapters 3 and 4, we are given instruction to recognize the blessedness of suffering for Christ.

1Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

1Peter 4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

When our position and decisions are based on the truths in God's word, we can be at peace. We can rest in the knowledge that before God we are innocent. Our goal is to bring glory to Him with our lives, to be a witness of His righteousness, to encourage those around us who know Him, and to draw those who don't know Him to His redeeming love.

Therefore –

We are to humbly admit when we have wronged and quietly take the punishment; and we are to humbly submit when we are wrongly accused because it finds favor with God.

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“For after all, what glory {is it}, or what can you possibly value yourselves upon, if, when ye have committed an offence, and are buffeted and corrected for it, ye endure {it}? How can you indeed do otherwise? or if you could, how shameful were it in such a case to rise against the hand of your injured masters? But if, when you have done good, and yet suffer through their tyranny and perverseness, ye endure {it} meekly and patiently, this {is} acceptable and graceful before God; his eye, which always judges of the true beauty of characters aright, is even delighted with such a spectacle, though exhibited in the lowest rank of human life”, *Philip Doddridge N.T.*

Is the time God has given you on this earth better spent in argument or acceptance? In defense of yourself or in defending the hope you have in Christ?

Are you displaying Christ's example in your responses?

Notice, where your acceptance is to be found. The words in 1 Peter 2:20 say, “**this finds favor with God**”. We are not to look for thanks and praise from those around us. When we do bear unjust persecution with a quiet spirit, we should thank God for the grace which enables us to do so (*cf. Spurgeon Devotional Commentary*). None of this is for our kudos or glory. Our responses should be borne out of gratitude for God's love and faithfulness towards us. If we become discouraged or disheartened because others do not notice our steadfast commitment even through difficulty, then we must check our heart motivation. God sees all things; we are ultimately serving Him.

Psalm 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Thy name give glory because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth.

Romans 12:1-2 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, [which is] your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.