

1 Peter 2:18-20 Enduring Suffering for Doing What is Good, Associating with Christ

God is God and you are not, and why that helps when you suffer for doing good

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, October 18, 2020
PASSAGES	1 Peter 2:18-23; 1 Peter 2:9-17; 1 Peter 3:8-9; 1 Peter 3:13-15; 1 Peter 4:1-11; Acts 17:25; Ephesians 6:12; Isaiah 40:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Luke 14:28-31; Hebrews 12:2; Matthew 11:30
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:02:26 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Perspective helps even when the situation does not change, and the biggest perspective of all is this: God is God, and you are not. Because we belong to him, we are exiles here, free to honor everyone, to bless when cursed, and to suffer for doing good the way Jesus did – not as a pattern we copy, but walking with him as sheep with their shepherd.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ God does not need our help the way ancient gods needed feeding. Treating outreach as if everything depends on us is the same idolatry dressed up differently.
- ◆ Our identity is that God chose us and gave us mercy. That matters more than every battle line our viciously partisan culture draws.
- ◆ The real war is not against the neighbor with the wrong yard sign. It is against the passions of the flesh – malice, envy, deceit and slander.
- ◆ Suffering for being rude is not persecution. Peter means suffering for doing good and for being associated with Christ.

- ◆ Following in Christ's steps is not copying a long-dead example; it is walking with a present, exalted Lord who, when reviled, did not revile back.
- ◆ Doing good to obtain God's blessing is not mercenary. It is childlike trust that he means what he says.
- ◆ If Christianity boils down to being a nice person, suffering will make you quit. If it is about Jesus, suffering has a purpose.

► 1:02:26

The livestream was glitching – “I’ll just try to preach glitchy and it’ll cancel out” – and Matt began with a parenting story. When their kids are screaming or throwing things, he and Mandy remind each other, “They’re acting like children,” which makes them laugh and lets the tension drain. To their two-year-old: “Sweetie, you’re acting like a two-year-old.” And the endless pandemic questions – how hot is the sun, did Thomas Jefferson invent ice cream, is all ice cream Thomas Jefferson flavored? “Go play with your sister.”

God is God, and you are not

► 1:05:35

“Perspective helps a lot, even if the situation doesn’t change.” It is natural to dwell on what bothers us. But the big picture, the main idea Matt wanted to carry through the rest of 1 Peter, is simple: God is God, and you are not. “It’s actually quite a liberating thought.”

► 1:06:31

In evangelism. Matt likes outreach, but not under the mindset that God needs our help – “this is a pyramid scheme,” the world is going to heck in a handbasket, and Christ will stand with arms folded because you did not save enough people. Some ancient religions, as in the Epic of Gilgamesh, held that humans were made to feed the gods. But the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob “is not served by human hands, as though he needed anything” (Acts 17:25). “We are not called into a forced-labor sweatshop. He offers us his very self.” The sheep do not carry the shepherd’s burden. “The idea that the body of Christ needs the efforts of men is the same idolatry of thinking that man feeds the gods, just dressed up differently.”

► 1:08:28

In judgment. God is better and smarter than we are, and he will not “drop the ball.” He is awake, aware, competent, not running out of steam – not a God who did wonders long ago and has since fallen asleep, leaving us to carry the torch.

► 1:09:42

In suffering. Last week, Matt said, he had “fumbled his way through” reminding the church that our hope is in God, not in circumstances changing. “I don’t know if you’ve noticed this about planet earth, but none of us gets out of this alive.” This week: the purpose in suffering. Peter is talking about suffering for what is good, for association with Christ – and often the very thing that gets us in trouble is proclaiming his excellencies. “It’s not up to me to make this situation right. The only thing I can do is walk in obedience... He will judge what’s right, he will wipe away every tear.”

1. Who we are: exiles who belong to him

► 1:11:51

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light... Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

1 PETER 2:9-12 ↗

► 1:13:00

Peter reminds the people of “Bithynia, Cappadocia, Asia, Austin, wherever they are” who they are: a people from every tribe and culture whose defining mark is that he chose them and gave them mercy. Our culture has “a strong altar of self” – this is what I’m for, what I’m against, this is me – “an altar of ego that’s insanely pervasive.”

► 1:14:14

So we are sojourners, passing through. Matt understood why the world is viciously partisan, with battle lines over politics, gender and ethnic identity. “We’re creative. We’ll fight about anything.” But this is not our forever home. “There is a God. We’re not him. We can trust him. He gave us our identity, so that identity matters more than all these other things we bicker about constantly.” That is why we can live honorably among unbelievers, even in suffering, playing to his values and his reward.

► 1:16:38

And the real battle is not where we think. The passions of the flesh “wage war against your soul.” That is why Peter says put away malice (1 Peter 2:1). “Your battle isn’t against people – your neighbor with

the wrong sign or whatever. Your battle is against envy and deceit, hypocrisy and slander.” There is a real war, but not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12).

► 1:17:16

That is why we can honor all people, remembering humbly that without God’s grace we would be just as partisan and cutting. Live as free people, as servants of God: “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Peter 2:16–17). “It’s hard to say that in 2020, but we can honor everyone” – the mayor, the governor, the city council, “I know it’s going to be hard to honor all those at the same time, based on your disposition.” But our fear is reserved for God.

2. Suffering for doing good

► 1:18:27

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.”

1 PETER 2:18-20 ↗

► 1:19:10

It is easy to be kind to people who are nice to you – “oh, I feel so spiritual.” Peter means the unjust too. And he does not mean burning every bridge, being rude and slanderous, then crying persecution when people dislike you. “We’re talking about suffering for being associated with Christ, not suffering for being extraordinarily rude.”

► 1:19:46

Some think any suffering means they lacked faith. Peter says the opposite: “For to this you have been called.”

“...because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten.”

1 PETER 2:21-23 ↗

► 1:20:55

Following his steps is not copying a good man who lived long ago. “Christianity is not copying his pattern. He’s real. He’s a present, exalted Lord,” and we walk with him as sheep with a shepherd. When he was reviled he did not revile back – unlike our first instinct: “Oh yeah? Well, you’re just a dirty, rotten, smelly goose. Or gander – which one’s the gander?” (The things you learn at church.)

► 1:22:09

Servants and masters is Peter’s example, but it applies at the neighborhood association – “not always associated with glory and honor and praise, HOAs” – at the school board meeting, in class, at home between wives and husbands, children and parents. Mindful of God, we can suffer honorably and not repay evil for evil. Why would any of that matter? Peter has just quoted Isaiah: the grass withers and the flower fades, “but the word of our God will stand forever” (Isaiah 40:8). This affliction is momentary; the kingdom is coming in glory, and it will be an honor to have suffered representing it.

3. Bless, to obtain a blessing

► 1:23:57

“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.”

1 PETER 3:8-9 ↗

► 1:24:33

Déjà vu – “to this you were called” again. And if acting honorably in order to receive God’s blessing bothers you, Matt said, it shouldn’t. A child told “do this chore and I’ll give you an extra piece of chocolate” does it because they trust you. “It’s not weird to be trying to store up treasure in heaven. It shows a childlike, direct trust. He said he’d repay; I actually believe him.” The body of Christ should respect that mentality.

► 1:25:08

“Even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:13–15). We show respect to everyone, but we fear God. “I would rather hit back, but I’m reminded he’s in charge,” and showing honor is how I honor him as Lord in my heart.

4. If it is only about being nice

► 1:26:14

A side note, Matt warned, that might be distracting. If Christianity boils down to being a nice person, what perseverance will you have when suffering comes? Kindness is great, “but don’t make a secondary thing the primary thing.” Get flak for associating with Jesus, and you will reason that you can be nice anywhere – “I could be Mormon, or a nice atheist.” But when Paul names what is of first importance, every statement is about Jesus ([1 Corinthians 15:3–4](#)). “He’s our focus, which is actually helpful. It makes the suffering worth it to remember him.”

► 1:27:48

Come to Christ expecting deliverance from all inconvenience, perfect health and an easy life, and you are like the man who builds half a tower without counting the cost, or the king who goes to war without counting his soldiers ([Luke 14:28–31](#)). Suffering comes, “and you think, this isn’t what I bought. I’d like a refund.” Christianity is not “a Precious Moments doll collection of just sweetness.” It is triumphant glorying in the risen Lord: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. “Whatever happens to me in this momentary life – I hope it’s not awful – I will still honor him, because he’s what it’s all about.” That gives purpose in suffering, though it might get us into more of it. Christ suffered “for the joy that was set before him” ([Hebrews 12:2](#)) and walked in glory because of it, not in spite of it.

5. Armed with the same way of thinking

► 1:29:38

So Peter says arm yourselves with Christ’s way of thinking ([1 Peter 4:1–4](#)). Sometimes the suffering is simply that people are surprised you will not join their flood of debauchery, or double down with envy, slander and malice, and they mock you for it. “It’s never ending.” The answer is the same: set your mind on Christ, honor him as Lord, remember he is coming to judge the living and the dead.

► 1:31:08

“Therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace... in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

1 PETER 4:7–11 ↗

► 1:31:47

In the middle of all this, Matt said, guard your prayers, return to him daily, keep loving your brothers and sisters, show hospitality without grumbling, and use the gifts he gives – some to speak, some to serve – so that God is glorified, “because it’s his glory anyway.”

We get the better end of the deal

► 1:33:11

Christ suffered greatly – harassed, lied about, nearly pushed off a cliff – for the joy set before him, to bring people to the Father. He did not shy away but walked through it with purpose. “It’s almost an honor and a dignity to suffer alongside our Lord,” remembering that people said stupid things about him too.

► 1:34:24

God did not make us to feed him, “like he was running out of gold and needed people to go mine the mountains.” What can you offer him? Yourself, in willing and joyful obedience. The weight of the world is not on your shoulders. “I think we get the better end of the deal, because we offer him us, but he offers us him. What a steal.” So even in suffering we can glory in him, brag about him, proclaim his excellencies, and walk in “the easy and light yoke that he gave me” ([Matthew 11:30](#)), trusting him to do what only he can do. Matt prayed for the Spirit to reveal God more, strengthen faith and give perseverance, and invited anyone who wanted prayer to come forward.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Acts 17:25
- 1 Peter 2:9–12
- 1 Peter 2:1
- Ephesians 6:12
- 1 Peter 2:16–17
- 1 Peter 2:18–20
- 1 Peter 2:21–23
- Isaiah 40:8
- 1 Peter 3:8–9
- 1 Peter 3:13–15
- 1 Corinthians 15:3–4
- Luke 14:28–31
- Hebrews 12:2
- 1 Peter 4:1–4
- 1 Peter 4:7–11
- Matthew 11:30

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where do you feel the weight of thinking God needs your help – in outreach, in your family, in the state of the world – and what would “God is God and you are not” lift off you?
2. Which battle lines in our culture most pull at your identity, and how does being a chosen exile who belongs to God change how you hold them?
3. How can you tell the difference between suffering for doing good and suffering for being difficult, and where have you confused the two?
4. Matt said following Christ is walking with a present Lord, not copying a dead example. How does that change what it means not to revile back?
5. Who is the hardest person for you to honor right now, and what is one concrete way you could bless instead of retaliating this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48iyuFYPHow&t=3746s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.