

Right Reactions to Unkind Actions

I Peter 4:12-19

Intro: Did you ever ask the question, Why is this happening to me? Why are people so mean when I don't think I am doing anything to them?

Peter spends a lot of time dealing with the issue of suffering in life. He tells us that there are basically three kinds of suffering in life. We are usually experiencing one of the three, at any point in our life.

Common suffering - This happens just because we are human beings, and things go wrong in this fallen world.

Carnal suffering - This suffering I cause myself by the choices and dumb decisions that I make. We bring a lot of suffering on ourselves. The principle of Galatians 6:7 is still true. "You will always reap what you sow!"

Christian suffering - This is when we suffer for doing good. When we suffer for the right thing, we suffer redemptively. Jesus suffered because He did right. Suffering is sometimes for our good and for our betterment.

In I Peter Chpt. 4 it says that there are five things we need to do when we suffer as a Christian.

I. Realize that suffering is bound to happen

4:12 Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you.

If you're going to be a believer there are things in your life that people won't like and that will cause them to act badly towards you. In Luke 9:21-24 Jesus basically said if you follow Me there will be people who get upset with you, people that don't approve of you, people who simply don't like you. However, if you have no enemies, you are apt to be in the same predicament in regard to friends.

Notice John 15:20, *Do you remember what I told you? 'A servant is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you!* Jesus was perfect but they crucified Him. Quite an outlook isn't it?

In Ephesians 6:12 it says, *"We're not fighting against human beings but wicked spiritual forces."* To help us react right with the people who are unkind to us remember, **they are not our enemy, but like us, they are victims of the enemy.**

II. Rejoice when it does happen

V 13 *Instead, be very glad (or rejoice) --because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world.*

The key word here is the rejoice. It doesn't say **"enjoy"** but it says **"rejoice"**. Rejoicing means choosing to have a positive attitude in spite of it. Why should I rejoice? Peter lists three reasons.

A. Suffering draws me closer to God.

It's Jesus and me together in this thing. So when we suffer for doing the right thing it draws us closer to Christ. Notice what Paul said in Philippians 3:10. *As a result, I can really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I can learn what it means to suffer with him, sharing in his death,* When we go through the fire **for** Jesus, we're actually going through the fire **with** Jesus. The person who abandons himself to God will never be abandoned by God.

B. Secondly, it means that God can be seen in my life.

I Peter 4:14. *Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God will come upon you.* If we're never challenged for our faith, what does that say about our faith? Notice what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

When people put us down and harass us for our faith it means we are a person of character and we have conviction. So when we are attacked for our beliefs and life style, rather than reacting badly, we can rejoice.

C. It says God can trust me.

Why did God allow Job to lose everything he had? Because God could trust him. Why did God allow the three young Hebrew men to go through the fiery furnace? Because God knew He could trust them. Can God trust us? He can't, if we react badly every time someone is unkind to us. How we doing in this area?

III. Refuse to be ashamed.

1 . People are going to throw stuff like assaults at us just to see how we react. How we respond is a powerful witness about what we believe.

2 . Notice V 16 *but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.*

See where it says "If you suffer as a Christian." Sadly, sometimes we do not suffer as believers but rather, some of the suffering that makes us so react so badly is simply the result of our being an idiot.

3 . Peter says, "If you suffer as a Christian, don't be ashamed, but praise God that you bear His name." Don't be embarrassed for your faith, or your values. But stand firm.

4 . The basic problem really is the fear of rejection. We're afraid of what other people will think of us. What's the antidote to that fear?

A. Realize that we don't need the approval of everybody in order to be happy in life. Whether you approve of me or not, actually has nothing to do with my happiness.

B. Be more concerned with what God thinks about you, than what other people think about you. Remember Luke 6:26 *What sorrows await you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets.*

IV. Remember the reward we'll receive.

II Cor. 4:17 For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever!

If somebody doesn't like us, if somebody puts us down because of our faith, that's only temporary. The reward for standing up for our faith is going to last for eternity so be sure to keep the long perspective. You don't have to be popular with everybody right now. **Thought:** The gains of heaven will more than compensate for the losses of earth.

The Bible teaches very clearly that there are going to be levels of rewards in heaven as some will rule over many, and some over few. When we get to heaven, God isn't going to look at how much money we saved in our bank account, or how many trophies, awards, or plaques were on our walls.

Instead, God's going to look at the scars we have. Did our faith cost us anything? It says, if we share in His suffering we will share in His glory. That should be enough encouragement to keep us from reacting too badly whenever we are the recipients of someone's unkind actions or words.

V . Remain faithful to God

How do you do it? There are two ways.

- 1 . **Remember**, Sometimes suffering is exactly God's will for our life since God is more interested in our character than in our comfort.
- 2 . This is not like the popular health and wealth Gospel we hear so much about today. Suffering according to God's will as outlined in I Pet. 4 is redemptive, not necessarily fun or easy. In other words, it is for our growth and the blessing for other people. If God answered every prayer we ever made, and gave us everything we ever wanted,
3. If he took away all our problems, we'd be a spoiled brat. And God isn't interested in raising spoiled brats. Instead, He says remain faithful even when the heat's on. He is saying don't react unkindly just because someone is unkind to you.

Finally, ask yourself these two questions:

- 1 . Do people notice Christ in my life? Or do I display such a bad reaction every time someone is unkind to me that no one is blessed by it?
- 2 . Secondly. Does my reaction sometimes possibly keep them from coming to the Lord?

Is it possible that the world is ready to hear about the good news of Christ, but does my sometimes, or maybe oftentimes, negative reactions in these situations keep them from hearing that good news because they are so busy seeing my unkind reactions, they can't hear that good news?

One final thought. Have you met the one who is the good news? The one who can help you react in a good way when it seems like bad things happen to you? If not would you considerer the following few lines and make a decision to find that helper who is waiting to help you react in a good way to the people in your life?

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God.
Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)