

In the Face of Suffering, Be a Blessing

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, good morning everybody. This sounds very loud. I'm sure Millen can sort it out. Firstly, just a warm welcome to Danny and Laura. I know you guys are hiding anonymously there.

You were a minute ago. Danny and Laura lead the church in DB, DB International Community Church. Is that right? Something along those lines. And they've just moved to Hong Kong six weeks ago or so to take up that role. And they're with us this morning. Guys, great to have you with us. So just a warm welcome to you. It's great to have you with us today. Now, I do apologize for this very boring weather. I know last week was a little bit more exciting. And this is a bit tame after last Sunday. But it is good to be back together today. Last Sunday was our first typhoon we have ever experienced in our lives before. And so thank you for welcoming us with such a gentle little intro to Hong Kong. It is great to be with you though together. Now this morning we continue our series called The Splendor in the Furnace as we work through the book of 1 Peter. And I hope you got to listen to last week's sermon. I do apologize for the way it sounded. I was recording it in my bedroom looking at the mirror, which is not as good looking as you folk. I tried to preach with much conviction and authority and excitement, but it wasn't quite the same. And so I listened to a little bit of it afterwards and I thought that sounds dreadful. But anyway, I hope it served some purpose. But if you didn't get to listen to last week's message, it is the previous seven verses, which is a very contentious passage because it starts off like this. It says, likewise, wives submit to your husbands. Okay? And then it goes on for the next six verses to talk about how God calls Christian wives not to live a life of self-assertion of their rights, but a selfless, sacrificial life of surrender. Now ladies, before you stone me or storm out, at the end of that passage, Peter says the exact same thing to the husbands. He says, likewise, husbands. And then he calls husbands to live a life of selfless, sacrificial, servant-heartedness towards their spouses. And Peter starts with both those sentences, likewise, wives, likewise, husbands. And the reason is because just before that, he said, employees submit to your masters, even those that treat you unjustly. And then before that, he says, all Christians surrender to the government, to authorities and those in leadership.

And so for two chapters, Peter has called all Christians in all circumstances to rather than living a life where they demand their rights and what they feel is fair, to live a life of selfless, selfless, sacrificial surrender. And Elizabeth Elliot said it like this, the secular world looks for happiness through self-assertion, asserting my rights, my privileges.

The Christian knows that joy is found in self-abandonment. And the grand motivation of this, of course, is Jesus Christ. Right in the middle of that passage, Christ, the perfect example, who suffered unjustly for our sins is raised as the great example. Now, if you're anything like me, the natural response to this radical call from the scriptures to live lives of selfless, self-surrender is you've got to be joking, right? And maybe you think, Kevin, that might work for you guys in the office. You work in a Christian office and you can pray together and everyone's nice and kind to each other. But where I work, it's dog eat dog, okay? People are out to get one another. No one cares about one another. You trample on top of one another. All of this turn the other cheek, be nice to each other. That's pie in the sky stuff. That doesn't work in the real world.

And so my job this morning is to help convince us from the scriptures that God's word does work. And that the very best thing we can do with our one and only lives is to trust Christ and to bank our lives on him and to follow Christ's example by living radical lives of self-sacrifice and self-abandonment for others. That's when suffering for the gospel comes, God's call is don't retreat into self-preservation, but continue to give yourself for the sake of others, okay?

[4 : 18] And so the big idea this morning is this. When you're persecuted for being a follower of Jesus, bless those who persecute you and keep your eyes fixed on the hope that is found in Jesus.

Okay, when you're persecuted for following Jesus, bless those who persecute you and keep your eyes fixed on the hope that is found in Jesus. And there's two kind of main points this morning. The first one is a scandalous response to persecution and then secondly, a scandalous reason for this response, okay? So let's dive in. We're looking at 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 8 to 22. Now I must just tell you, the second half of this passage, Martin Luther, who is a wonderful Bible commentator and reformer, he wrote, I think I actually took it out, he wrote something like, of all the passages in the New Testament, this is probably the most difficult to understand. I still have no idea what the Apostle Paul was trying to say. So we're going to try our best to see if we can make some sense of this passage today. Okay, so, but firstly, let's look at verse 8 to 17 together. So if you're new this morning, the context of the book of 1 Peter is that these Christians are being persecuted, they're being oppressed, they're being harassed because they are followers of Jesus, they won't follow the household gods and society's gods, and so their honor is being disgraced, they are being publicly shamed for following Jesus. And some of this is coming from their families, their spouses, some of it's coming from their parents, because they won't follow the family gods, some of it's coming from the employers, and some of it from the government. But friends, it's important for us to realize that this is not just a unique time in history at the beginning of the church. Jesus said that if you follow Jesus, you will endure persecution. Jesus said, the way they treated me is the same way that they will treat you.

And so as you read the history of the church throughout the ages, Christ's followers have always endured such persecution. This is not an obscure incident that just happened 2,000 years ago. If you follow Jesus, the chances are that this will happen to you as well. And so the question is, how do we respond?

Do we just silently endure it and turn the other cheek? Do we retaliate and say, I'm going to show you just who's boss? How do we respond when persecution comes our way? Well, let's look at verse 9.

Peter writes this. He says, Now, when we think of blessing someone, we often think of just saying something nice back to them.

[7 : 05] Somebody says something unkind and you retaliate with some kindness. My three-year-old daughter, she's now four, but earlier this year, a great example of this. I don't know where this came from. Well, actually I do. It came from her mother. Okay, let me just say this. But she was at school, she's three years old, and her one friend says to her, Shiloh, you can't come to my birthday party.

And Shiloh says, that's okay, you can still come to mine. I don't know where she got that from other than from Claire's kindness. It certainly wasn't from me. But Jesus is not just, I mean, Peter, Jesus through Peter, is not just saying that. He's not just saying when somebody says something unkind, you say something kind back to them. In the Bible, to bless somebody is to pray for God's favor to rest upon them. It's to get on your knees and call on God and say, God, I pray for your blessing on this person. And so look at what Peter says. When somebody persecutes you and oppresses you, do not repay their evil with evil, but instead bless them, pray for them. Karen Jobes tells the story of a Christian military serviceman in the United States. Every night he stayed in a barracks with a whole bunch of other soldiers. And every night, just before going to bed, he would spend some time reading the scriptures and praying. And he had a fellow soldier in his barracks that stayed across the aisle from him. And this guy just thought this was ridiculous. And so every night he would mock him and laugh at him and ridicule him and say all sorts of things. And one day, this particular soldier had a bad day. And so as this Christian's reading his Bible, this guy grabs whatever he can find, which happens to be some muddy boots, combat boots. And he throws them across the aisle at this guy. And he hits this guy. And so now he's got mud on his pillow and on his Bible and on him and just before they go to bed.

Well, the next morning, you've got to get up early for inspection, you know, dressed, ready for inspection, inspect your boots. And so this guy that threw this boot across the aisle gets up to look for his boots so he can clean them quickly. And he finds them neatly put at the end of his bed, washed, cleaned, cleaned, and polished. What happened was this Christian, after the lights had gone out, had got and found his boots, stayed up and polished his boots and got them ready for inspection the next morning. And this is what Peter calls us to. He says, respond to insults with blessing.

Respond to scoffing and mocking with prayers and acts of divine favor. Now the question is, why do we find this so hard to do? Why is this hard? Well, one of the things I'm learning about our culture here is that we as a culture hate to be outdone by anybody else. Is that right?

Somebody does something good for you and you feel like you can't just receive it without paying them back. Is that right? We had this in the lift the other day. We were going up our lift and a couple walked in and the wife was very large and about to give birth any day now. And so we said to her, hey, when are you due? She said, I'm past my due date any day now. And so two weeks later, Claire and I took some flowers down to them. I said, hey, congratulations on your new baby, et cetera, et cetera. Two weeks later, we get a knock on our door and this couple come with a big box of strawberries, right? And so I thought, ah, I know how this game works. As long as I continually being nice to them, they'll be nice back to me. And so then I wrote a card and put it in their mailbox and it ended there. They didn't respond. My game didn't work, right?

[10:38] But then last Sunday, we had this typhoon. And so Claire says, hey, let's invite Matt and Fiona up to our house for tea. And so we text them and they say, hey, why don't you come for tea to our house?

We're all locked indoors anyway. And so then they arrive with this big parcel of goodies and things, right? Why? Because in Hong Kong, we hate to be outdone by anybody. Nobody can get one better at us.

If somebody pays for something, we want to pay them back. Is that right? Sort of, okay? Well, it also works when somebody harms us. We hate to be outdone. We don't want to lose face. And so when somebody does something to us, we don't want to lose face. And so we feel like I can't be shown to have been weak. And so I've got to do something back to them. And then what happens? They feel like they've got to do something back to us, right? And it just escalates. Friends, where does that go?

Where does it end when you repay evil for evil? Who wins in the end? I read a great line this week in a book the author wrote, those who fought together to overthrow the king now quarreled amongst themselves. They had won the war, but they lost all peace. They defeated their enemies, but in their hearts, they were just as bitter as ever before. And so when this retaliation, you repay evil for evil, where does it get you? Who wins in the end? Well, friends, there is a way to win.

There is a way to win the war when somebody gets back at you and you're tempted to get back at them. The way to win the battle is to bless them, is to pray for them, to find it within yourself, to pray for God's favor, to rest upon them. You see, in blessing those who curse you, you're both uprooting evil and self-imprisonment, and at the same time, you're sowing seeds of redemption.

[12 : 22] You're cutting at the root the tree of bitterness and self-preservation, and you're planting instead seeds of redemption and seeds of healing. And part of the reason why this is so hard is that because when somebody does something wrong to us, or somebody oppresses us, or somebody persecutes us, and when you ask God to be gracious to such a person, it feels like a part of your soul is dying.

Or is it only me that feels like that? Right? When somebody does something wrong, and I feel like God calls me to respond with blessing and praying for God's favor, it feels like I'm dying inside.

But friends, that's exactly what is happening, because my self-centeredness and my pride is being crucified in that very moment. In that very moment, I'm praying and saying, God, let your kingdom come. Let your will be done in my heart as it is in heaven, and a part of my pride is dying. And so look at what Peter says here. He says in verse 9, he says, It's counterintuitive, but God promises that as we respond counterintuitively and counterculturally, that something of his favor and his blessing rests upon those who bless their enemies.

I remember many years ago as a student at university, and I listened to a man that I really respected talk about praying for his enemies. And I thought, man, I'm going to try that. And I didn't have too many enemies, but there were a couple of people that used to rub me the wrong way, right?

There were a couple of people that just could get on my nerves. And so I decided that I'm going to try and pray for them every time they do that. I'm going to pray the very best prayer that I can pray for myself. I'm going to pray for them. I'm going to pray for their jobs. I'm going to pray for their marriages. I'm going to pray for their finances. I'm going to pray for their children. Whatever I would love someone to pray for me, I decided I'm going to try and pray for them. For instance, you know who was blessed the most in that whole situation? I was. You know how many relationships were turned around overnight? People that we weren't quite seeing eye to eye. People where there's tension. The relationships are healed and restored. I can tell you story after story after story of how God healed relationships just because somehow God inspired me to pray for them. That story of the soldier that Karen Jobe tells, the story goes on because in the coming weeks and months, that Christian soldier led countless other soldiers to Christ in his barracks. Men that were hardened by battle were suddenly softened by the gospel as they saw him responding to persecution with kindness.

[15 : 12] You see, friends, this is the scandalous call of the gospel, that because of Jesus and who he is, that we are those who are able to bless even when oppressed, to pray for those who hurt us.

And of course, the supreme example of this is Jesus Christ himself. Christ having been flogged beyond recognition, having been subject to the vilest hatred and animosity. Jesus being just scorned and mocked and beaten beyond recognition. Jesus who is treated worse than people would have treated their enemies and their animals. Jesus finally is nailed to the cross and he's suffocating to death and he cries out, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.

Friends, where's our world going to find such a love like that? It's not going to find us in the sinful heart of humanity. It's going to find us, it's going to find it in the everlasting heart of Christ himself.

Jesus Christ, our Father, forgive them. They don't know what they do. And then look at what Peter does here. Peter quotes, for the second time in this letter, Psalm 34.

And Psalm 34 is a psalm that is written when King David is on the run. Remember, David, he's not yet king, but he has been anointed king by Samuel. Samuel's promised David, you're going to be king. But the king at the moment is who? It's King Saul. And so David is on the run because Saul is jealous of David and Saul wants to kill him. And so David has tried to avoid him and eventually he can't avoid him anymore.

[16 : 50] And so David skips the border and runs across the border to where the Philistines are. But while he's in the Philistine territory, the Philistines recognize him and they start to say amongst themselves, hang on, isn't this David who used to come and defeat our enemy, our army? And so the Philistines start to talk amongst themselves. And David hears this and thinks, this is not looking good. I'm an enemy at home and now I'm an enemy here. He's being squeezed by both sides. Both sides want to take David out.

And in this moment, David writes this psalm, Psalm 34. And so look at what he says. Peter quotes it here. He says, whoever desires to love life and to see good days. Friends, if I was being persecuted on every side, I would write a psalm about how terrible life was and how miserable and unfair God was to me. But David writes about loving life and seeing good days. He says, if you want to see this, let him keep his tongue from evil. Let us keep his lips from speaking deceit against his enemies. Let him turn away from reviling, from doing evil and let him do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it.

That's an amazing thing to write. Just after this, David goes back to Israel and he's hiding in the caves. Saul wants him dead. Saul has sent an army after him and David is hiding in the caves. And at that moment, Saul is chasing him and he doesn't know where David is. He knows he's somewhere around here and Saul needs to relieve himself. He needs to go to the washroom, right? But there's no washrooms in the desert. So Saul decides to go into this cave to go and relieve himself. And David is hiding in the cave. And so Saul is at his most vulnerable. And David's friends say to him, he's right there.

There's your enemy. Go and take him out. And David says, forget it. I will not touch my enemy or repay his evil with evil. We will bless him who has given evil to us. Now friends, why does David do that?

God gives his enemy into his hands. Why does David not take him out? Well, look at what David says here in verse 12. He says, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers.

[19 : 07] The face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Friends, do you want the face of the sovereign God, the majestic God who made all the world? Do you want his face to shine upon you or to be turned against you? Remember the great blessing of Numbers chapter 6. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May he make his face shine upon you. May he be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Friends, do you want God to turn his face towards you and give you peace?

There is a way. There is a way. And David says it's for those who bless those who revile them. Friends, if you're a Christian this morning, is there somebody that you may need to pray God's blessing over them? Friends, you have parents that have hurt you and scarred you and left you wounded.

Maybe it's a spouse that has spoken words that have broken your spirit and broken your heart. Can you pray for them? Friends, is there somebody at work to whom you can repay their words of mocking and scorn with kindness and blessing? Friends, maybe there's somebody who gives you a hard time because you're a Christian. Maybe someone who opposes your faith and makes you feel small and insignificant. Can you pray for them? Can you pray for God's blessing upon them? Peter writes this and says, do not repay evil for evil, but on the contrary, bless them. For to this you've been called that you may obtain a blessing. For the eyes of the Lord are on those who are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. A radical, scandalous response to persecution. Secondly, a scandalous reason for doing so. Now, again, if you're like me, you might think this has got to be a joke, right? This just doesn't make any sense. What kind of world do you live in, Kevin and Peter and everyone else? Now, let's look at what happens in the second half of this passage. In verse 14, Peter says here briefly, he says, have no fear, don't be troubled, in your hearts honor Christ as Lord. So he's saying, don't be scared. People persecute you, they oppress you, they oppose you, don't be scared. Verse 13, he says, who's there to harm you?

Because God is sovereign. Your hands are not in the hands of your enemies. Your life is in the hands of the sovereign God. So don't be scared of them. Don't be afraid of them. But keep your heart fixed on King Jesus, okay? And now look at what he says, verse 17. He says, for it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be the Lord's will, than for doing evil. Okay, so better that you suffer temporarily in this life than you take vengeance on your enemies and then you face God's judgment.

[21 : 54] And now he wants us to know that our life, he wants to call us to fix our eyes on Jesus. And so Peter wants to drive this home. He wants to lift the heads of weary Christians who are caught up in their circumstances. And he says, lift your eyes to Jesus and see him who's seated on the throne. And Peter's going to say two things. He says, look to Jesus because Jesus, just as Jesus' death brought life, so your suffering will produce good. And secondly, he says, because what appeared as defeat for Jesus actually resulted in victory. Okay? He says, look to Jesus, follow his example, because just as Jesus' death brought life, so your suffering will produce good. And just as Jesus' death looked like defeat, actually it resulted in victory. And so look at what he says here, verse 17.

It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil, for or because Christ also suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

Friends, in the midst of your suffering, in the midst of your persecution, in the midst of people mocking you and reviling you and pouring evil on your life, look to Jesus and take courage. And if you doubt it, if you're not sure if your suffering will ever produce any good, remember Jesus. Remember Christ, the example of the only righteous man who ever suffered. And look at how his suffering produced life.

Friends, if Jesus had not been willing to go to the cross, to suffer unjustly, to endure the shame, to experience the ultimate dishonor, you and I would be stuck in our sin. You and I would be left without hope.

But friends, Jesus did suffer, and therefore we do get the one thing that our hearts desperately need, and our hearts were made for, we get to be brought back to God. Out of his suffering came renewed hope.

[23 : 49] Out of his rejection came acceptance. Out of his death came life. And Peter says, if you're a follower of Jesus, and you follow his example, the pattern of Christ's life is the pattern of your life.

Out of his death came life. Out of your suffering comes life as well. You remember the story of Joseph in the Old Testament? Joseph is a young man, and he's got a whole bunch of brothers, and his brothers are jealous of him, right?

He's got the father's favor, and he can be a little bit irritating, let's be honest. But so his brothers decide, this guy, we've had enough of him. Let's just get rid of him.

And so Joseph's brothers decide to kill him. And they're busy plotting how to get rid of him. And then some people, some slave traders drive past, and they say, well, let's just sell him to the slave traders.

That way we can make some money off his life and get rid of him in the process, right? Double honor. And so they sell their brother to these slave traders on the way to Egypt. So Joseph goes to Egypt, and he's working as a slave, and God's favor's upon him, and he works his way up.

[24 : 56] And then he gets thrown into jail unjustly. And while he's in jail, he finds somebody that can get him out of jail. And so he says, hey, remember me when you leave jail. And as this guy leaves jail, he forgets all about Joseph.

And so Joseph's life just goes from bad to worse. But eventually, God hasn't forgotten about him. And so God releases him from jail, his favor's upon him, and Joseph actually becomes kind of the prime minister of Egypt.

And many years later, 40 years later or so, he meets his brothers. And his brothers are now petrified because his brothers think he's going to get us back. But look at what Joseph says.

Joseph says to him this. He says, what you intended for evil, God intended for good. To bring it about that many people should be saved, just as is the case today.

You see, his unjust suffering, his humiliation was the very thing that saved Israel. And think about what Jesus said. Jesus said, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone.

[25 : 57] But if it dies, there it produces fruit. Jesus said this. He said, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.

Jesus wasn't talking about being lifted up in honor and being exalted and being raised to the heavens. He said, when I am lifted up on the cross, when they hoist me up on the cross and they mock me and they scorn me and they crucify me, in that moment I will draw people and save people and draw them to myself.

And friends, that's what Peter is saying. He's saying, just as Jesus was hoisted on the cross unjustly, illegitimately, without any legality, his death brought life.

And friends, in the same way that as you and I face persecution, as you and I face oppression, as you and I face maybe ridicule and opposition, that in the economy of God's kingdom, that injustice produces life.

If we'll be those who respond to evil with blessing. Friends, if you're a Christian this morning, it may well be that you'll suffer for it. Friends, if you're a young lady here, your boyfriend may break up with you because you won't sleep with him.

[27 : 11] Friends, maybe you won't get that promotion at job because you won't flirt with your boss or dress inappropriately. Maybe if you're here this morning, your girlfriend might break up with you because she's not a follower of Jesus and doesn't want to follow Jesus with you.

Friends, it may mean that you remain single all of your life because you're attracted to the people of the same gender as yourself and yet you choose to honor God with your sexuality. Friends, it may mean that you suffer financially because you won't cut corners or you disclose some information which was previously hidden.

It may mean that your parents or your family shame you because you won't worship the family ancestors like they want you to. Friends, it may feel like your soul is being put to death in the furnace.

But in that furnace, you'll find a splendor. In that furnace, you'll find some gold. In that furnace, your heart will be purified like gold in a furnace. And you'll find something about Christ and you'll discover a beauty and a purity and a majesty about Christ that you'll never have discovered outside of the furnace.

Friends, in that furnace, your soul will sing. You'll find that you'll get to know Jesus and the beauty of the gospel in a way you never would have apart from that suffering. Friends, if you follow Jesus to Calvary, a part of your sinful nature will be crucified and it will feel like you're being crucified.

[28 : 29] It'll feel like you're dying. And yet in that place, you'll find life. Friends, if you fix your eyes on Jesus, if you pay back evil with blessing, if you pray for those who persecute you.

And then finally, Peter gives us one last reason. He says, if you follow Jesus and blessing those who persecute you, remember how Jesus' death, which seemed like defeat, actually resulted in victory.

Look at verse 18. He says here, Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that's you and I, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the spirit.

And then verse 22 says, this same Lord Jesus, who has gone into heaven, is now at the right hand of God, with angels and authorities and powers now being subject to him.

See, friends, on that awful Friday afternoon, when Easter Friday, Jesus, they put a coat, a purple coat on him, that's the colors of royalty. They're mocking him and they put a crown of thorns on his head.

[29 : 36] They're laughing at him and saying, you pretend to be a king, we'll make you a king. They mock him, they beat him, they scorn him. As Jesus, his nine inch nails smashed through his hands.

As Jesus is on the cross and they put a spear in his side just to make sure that he really is dead, friends, in that afternoon, later in the evening, when Pilate comes to the soldiers and says, is Jesus really dead?

And they come back and they say, he's dead. That day, the Pharisees and the religious leaders must have been celebrating. They must have thought, we've got him. That day, the religious leaders must have thought, we finally got rid of that man.

That day, the disciples were locked away in the upper room for fear of the people that killed Jesus. And every single person in Jerusalem must have thought, he's dead. It's over.

It's gone. And every person must have thought that what a complete waste, that frauds like Judas Iscariot had won. Friends, imagine you're in the upper room with your disciples and you think to yourself, that, I was going to say something I won't say.

[30 : 45] That person, Judas Iscariot, won. He won. He betrayed Jesus and Judas got away with it. He didn't in the end.

And Jesus is dead. Friends, they must have thought that hypocrites like the religious leaders had won. Self-serving cowards like Pontius Pilate had won.

But friends, the hope-preserving, faith-building, confidence-giving truth of the gospel is that what seemed like defeat ended in victory. What seemed like Satan had triumphed over Christ, actually Satan was digging his own grave.

Because by dying on the cross, Jesus was taking upon himself the punishment for the sins of the world. He removed the power of death. He dissolved the sting and the accusation of the devil forever. Jesus' apparent defeat was actually his greatest victory over all creation, over all angels, over all authorities, over all powers, over all spirits, even death himself.

And now all those things are subject to him. Karen Jobes, the greatest, probably the best commentator on what Peter writes this, she says, what Peter is telling us is this, that even if a Christian were to suffer, let me move this side, to the point of unjust martyrdom for the sake of Christ, even such a suffering is both purposeful and victorious.

[32 : 08] Because death is not the final word. Christians following Christ's footstep through death to victory. Although the death of Christ was uniquely redemptive, those who suffer and even die unjustly simply because they are Christians are actually on the right side of the mysterious way in which God has chosen to work out his plan throughout the history of the world.

And then Peter gives us these two great examples. You see that? So Karen Jobes is saying this, she's saying, even though it looked like defeat, in the end it was victory. Jesus won even though he died.

And Peter now gives us two examples. He says, think about Noah. In the days of Noah, the world was filled with such wickedness and rebellion that God says he regretted making mankind such evil in the world.

Mankind was meant to be the pinnacle of God's creation, meant to be the image of God to show the world what God is like and the end mankind was a mess filled with such rebellion and sin. And so God calls a man, a family to trust him and to build an ark.

And the building of the ark was a proclamation of the gospel. As Noah's building the ark, he's saying to the people around him, turn from your sin and trust him, find refuge in this ark, find refuge in God and you'll be saved from the coming judgment.

[33 : 28] So as Noah's building the ark, he's proclaiming the gospel. He's saying, there's the problem of sin, but find refuge in God and you will be saved. And yet this ark must have been a ridiculous thing.

Imagine they're in the desert and Noah's building this gigantic big box and he's telling people that if you come and hide in here, you'll be saved. Friends, the ark must have involved or invited a whole lot of ridicule and scoffing.

Must have seemed like the most ridiculous thing in the world. Nonsensical. You don't hide in a boat, right? And yet that was Noah's deliverance. What seemed like nonsensical was his path to life.

What seemed ridiculous was actually his salvation. What seemed like judgment was actually his path to life. And then Peter gives us the example of baptism and so look at what he says.

He says, baptism saves you not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus. Now he's not saying baptism saves you because you earn your salvation.

[34 : 29] He's saying when you get baptized it's an expression of your faith in Jesus and that's what saves you. The fact that Jesus is enough. But he's saying that when you get baptized, as all Christians should, you're making a pledge.

You're making a promise. When you get baptized you're saying just as I go under the waters and come up again, my old life is dying and I'm coming back a new person. My old life has died to sin and now I'm alive to Christ again.

He's saying my old life of sin is dead and now I'm a new person in Jesus. And so when you suffer for Jesus you're living out your baptism pledge. When you are persecuted you're saying hey my old life is dead but in this death I come alive.

This old way has died but now I get a new life in Jesus. Friends, your baptism is a picture, it's a dramatization of that the old is dead but through that death you find new life.

And Peter's saying this, he says remember your baptism. Remember the picture painted for you. Remember that as people revile you and ridicule you and scoff you and mock you and you feel like you're dying a thousand deaths remember that that death produces life.

[35 : 38] Remember how Jesus' death tragic and as awful as it was was not the final word. It was just his way to new life. Friends, when you're persecuted and you're rejected you're ashamed for doing good when people laugh at you or scoff you because you're pursuing holiness because you're saying no to ungodliness when people don't understand you because you will not worship their idols when people jeer at you because you will not turn from sin friends when you pray for those who persecute you and you respond to their wickedness with blessing you may feel like you're dying a thousand deaths but that death is not the final word.

The final word is that it leads to life. It leads to life. Christians follow Jesus' footsteps through death to victory.

Mark Ballinger said this to be willing to free people from the debts that they owe you to release them from the punishment they deserve and to bless them you must have a greater reason to choose love.

God his glory and the gospel is that reason. Friends, every Christian in every church is constantly going to be tempted in one of two ways.

Either we'll try we'll preserve gospel doctrine gospel truth but it'll be divorced from real life we'll listen to a sermon on Sunday but on Monday it'll be divorced from the realities of life and we'll go on with our own life or we'll be a church that tries to live a good Christian life but is divorced from the gospel of who Christ is.

[37 : 12] Peter comes and he says remember Jesus remember how Christ suffered on the cross the only righteous one suffered unjustly died for your sins and my sins to bring us to God remember how Jesus through his death brought life and in the same way as you go into your week as you go to work tomorrow as you at home as people revile you let the gospel of Christ result in gospel life.

Peter's urging us to lift our eyes off of our circumstances to lift our eyes to Christ and because of who Jesus is to live this radically counterintuitive countercultural scandalous message of the gospel.

In this passage Peter calls us to be a church which is rich in gospel theology and rich in gospel life knowing that Christ suffered for our sins for your sins and my sins and not just sins long ago your sin this week my sin this week my sin this very day the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God.

Friends can we be such a church that lives this out? Can we be a church that is countercultural and swims upstream? Can we be those that repay evil with blessing and praying for our enemies?

Can we be those that are so in love with Christ and his gospel and his glory that we even be willing to endure such opposition for him? Let's pray together. Friends I want to pray for us together but my guess is that there's some of us here who maybe for the first time ever need to pray for people who your whole life you've wanted to just see maybe those that you've wanted to retaliate maybe those that you've wanted to repay their wickedness to you with wickedness friends maybe there's some people in our life who have made your life so difficult so unbearable the Bible doesn't say that they are immune from facing the consequences of what they've done but it does say it does ask us to pray for them friends this morning will you allow yourself to be crucified will you allow yourself to embrace and do probably the hardest thing you've ever done in your life and to bless them this morning will you allow a part of your self preservation self sufficiency maybe even self righteousness be crucified this morning as you respond to their wickedness and evil with blessing and prayer as I was praying for this week

[40 : 25] I was praying that some of us would be set free from the imprisonment that bitterness holds on us friends some of us are slaves to our own resentment there is a way to be free from it but it's the hardest thing in the world it's to follow Jesus to Calvary it's to die to ourselves that Christ may make us alive again it's to pray for those that have hurt us friends why don't you do that why don't you ask God to give you the faith to do that maybe some of us have never experienced that that's not our reality right now friends this morning as we've sang about this sure and steady anchor we continue to worship let's draw near to this sure and steady anchor let's draw near to the one who went to the cross for us that we could find life let's confess our sin and let's ask him to heal us and restore us and make us alive again