

“How to Experience Good Days (in the Midst of Bad Ones)” / 1 Peter 3:8–22

Together We Endure: The Letter of 1 Peter, #7

[Song before prayer time: [Goodness of God](#)]

Prayer time: not a promise, but God’s goodness

[Song after prayer time: [My Testimony](#)]

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If you have your Bibles, open them to 1 Peter 3. We’re going to be looking at vv. 8–22 today. I’ve heard this passage described like a shade in the midst of a really hot day.

I have to confess--I don’t enjoy this time of the year. It’s so hot. My wife loves the summer but I am more of a ‘late fall’ kind of guy--the heat just withers my soul. I saw this map on TV the other day:



But you know in the midst of the heat how good a moment of shade can feel. Or when you are pulling into some parking lot, you’ll park 300 yards from your destination so you can get a spot in the shade, so that it’s not 10,000 degrees inside your car when you come back. I came home the other day and Veronica had a friend

Works consulted:

“Submission: Part 3 (1 Peter 3:13–22),” Jen Wilkin

1 Peter 3:13–22, Bryan Loritts

“Sent to Share Our Hope (1 Peter 3:13–17),” Tony Merida

“Living and Loving the Good Life (1 Peter 3:8–12),” John MacArthur

“Securities Against a Hostile World (1 Peter 3:13–17),” John MacArthur

“The Triumph of Christ’s Suffering (1 Peter 3:18–22),” John MacArthur

over, and she had parked way down the street because there was the one pathetic little tree she could park underneath.

Shade is a welcome respite in the midst of bewildering heat.

That's what this passage feels like. It tells you how to experience shade from the harsh heat of the world and how to provide that kind of shade for others. Remember, Peter writes this letter to suffering believers--persecution and political upheaval have scattered them out of their homes, all over the Roman Empire.

(BTW, I think the word I've heard more than any other this year is "unprecedented." Covid! Lockdown! Racial tensions! Political chaos! Unprecedented! Unprecedented. Unprecedented!!!! And I get it--these are unusual times and I've used this word. But saying that is a little naive--even arrogant. A troubled, stressful, world is not "unprecedented." It's been the norm in history. For some of us, maybe for the first time our world feels a little bit--just a little bit-- like the world of Peter's first audience.)

So it makes this a good book for us to study together.

I was arrested this week by this phrase in the next section of chapter 3: **10 For, "[T]he one who wants to love life and to see good days...** Love life and see good days. So that's the title of the message, "How to Experience Good Days (in the Midst of Bad Ones)" Some of you are like, "That's not possible right now." Peter tells you that it is.

This passage has 4 basic instructions:

- Seek peace
- Expect suffering
- Turn misery into ministry
- Stay on message

1. Seek Peace (vv. 8–12)

v. 10 For, "[T]he one who wants to love life and to see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit, 11 and let him turn away from evil and do what is good. Let him *seek peace* and pursue it, 12 because 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 what is evil" (Psalm 34:12–16).

How do we seek good days in the midst of bad ones? We keep our tongues from speaking evil, turn away from evil and do good, and seek peace with all people.

This is a continuation, btw, of Peter's theme throughout this letter that in ANY situation we can always respond like Jesus. What did Jesus do in dark days? We've looked at this for 3 weeks now: 1. He was patient; 2. he entrusted himself to God, and 3. he kept doing good. Peter says when you suffer, you can do the same basic things. You don't need to try and control everything, assert yourself, or get vengeance--you can trust God with that. And that's because **vs 12** the eyes of the Lord ARE ON the righteous. He will always hear our prayer when we are doing things his way. But, and this the warning of **vs. 12**--when we take matters into our own hands--and seek vengeance or take control--well, then his face will turn against us, too.

Listen: There's a sweetness, a peace in giving up the responsibility to control everything, to always get even: *Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take him at his word! Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, But His smile quickly drives it away; Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear, Can abide while we trust and obey!*

That spirit of sweetness and rest should characterize the church, Peter says, and that sweet, peaceful spirit should feel like shade on a hot day. It's how we love life and see good days.

Peter gives several words that describe this sweetness in action, words he says should characterize the fellowship of the church:

8 ...be like-minded, "Be like-minded" means "pursue unity." BTW, let's point out the obvious--the fact that Peter commands this of us means it doesn't always come naturally! And that's because in a NT church you're supposed to have people of different cultures and backgrounds who find common hope in Christ. And when you have people of different cultures and backgrounds, they bring in different perspectives and cultural preferences and that creates tension. Jesus and the Apostles never envisioned the church as a place where everyone thought the same about everything. A place where everyone thinks alike on every issue is called a "cult." A CHURCH is a group of diverse who find a unity in Christ that outweighs their differences. They discover a message that unites them that goes far beyond any secondary agenda that divides them.

That is the vision for this place: not a place where everyone thinks exactly the same on all cultural and political issues, but where we are united by something that outweighs those differences--who we are in Christ and his message for the world.

He then gives us two words necessary for that kind of like-mindedness. First of all, vs. 8, be **"...and sympathetic,"** (with one another)." **Sympathy** means feeling something alongside someone else. Trying to enter in with them into their pain.

During a time of conflict, if you are sympathetic with your brothers and sisters, you will ask, "Do I really understand their perspective? What hurt is behind it? EVEN: Why do certain political messages resonate so deeply with them?" I'm not saying you have to agree with them, but sympathy means you at least try to see things through their eyes. Here's a question: If you are on the opposite side of some other believer with some issue, can you state their opinion in a way they would say fairly represents their view? Can you identify the concerns, or the pain, that underlies their perspective? Again, I'm not saying that in seeking to understand them that you concede they're right about everything, but I am saying they're human and they need Jesus and you can't give them Jesus if you don't even understand them.

He adds: and **"...love one another,"** Love means you care deeply about someone. Even more than you do having your own opinion affirmed back to you. Living with the gospel above all means caring more about each other and our unity in Christ than we do uniformity in opinion on a matter. Are you ok being around people who differ from you in some cultural or political perspective--because your love for them is greater than the affirmation of your perspective?

We see that spirit exemplified in Paul in Romans 14: There were issues in the church that were deeply divisive between Jews and Gentiles. They were emotional issues. And Paul had his opinion about who was right, btw, and he backed up his perspective with Scripture. He even called those who didn't see it his way "weak" in their gospel understanding.¹ But Paul said he would rather **downplay his convictions** on these issues in the church

¹ See Roman s 14:14; 14:2.

than see disagreement on them destroy the unity of the body. This is love! You care more about your brothers and sisters and unity in Christ than you do having everyone around echo your perspective back to you. Unity from love, not uniformity of perspective. Is this what you want?

Warning: This is hard! It's hard when you are deeply passionate and deeply convinced about something to be around people who think differently. But is the body of Christ and the message of the gospel worth that?

"...and be compassionate." he says next. The root word for "compassionate" in Greek is "splagma,"² which is a great Greek word I've told you about. It's "onomatopoeia," a word that sounds like what it is. Like SPLASH. The word 'splagma' means a deep feeling of pity that works up from within. You can hear it when you say it. SPLAGMA. Say it in your homes: SPLAGMA. It was supposed to mimic a guttural sound--SPLAGMA. It means you don't just fake nicety, like we do here in the South (bless his heart, what an idiot) but you really feel someone's pain. Let your love for others be more than just surface level platitudes. Really invest yourself emotionally in the pain of your brothers and sisters. Share it. Bear it. BTW, people can tell the difference when you're being polite and when you actually care. And they won't care what you have to say until they are convinced you really care for them. People don't care what you know until they know that you care.

"...and (be) humble," I think one of the chief causes of disunity is a bunch of people strutting around assuming they're right about everything. Are you at least open to being wrong, to having your perspective changed? Here's the problem with me: I always think I'm right about whatever I am thinking. My wife says the motto of my life should be: 'Often wrong, never in doubt.' But I'm always convinced of whatever I think. But now I look back 5 years and see perspectives I've had and now I think, "Wow, that was wrong." But at the time, I was totally convinced! Maybe that should evoke some humility that I'm not right about every perspective I have now! Hmm? You think?

Be willing to listen. You may still disagree, but maybe they'll help you see something you haven't seen. Again, here's a really practical tip: When you're in the midst of a disagreement, before you offer your opinion, make sure you can repeat back the point the other person is making in a way where they say, "That's right. That's how I feel." Don't just listen so you can refute their arguments. Listen so you can understand them.

How do you think people see you? As someone primarily concerned to get your opinion out, or someone really eager to listen? Humility means you'll be seen as someone eager to listen: quick to hear, slow to speak.

9 not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult. This is Peter's go-to theme--Be like Christ, who never returned evil for evil. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he was cursed, he blessed. When someone says something hurtful, harsh or condescending, don't return in kind.

Real talk. Right now: Are you seeking to bless your enemies? Do you desire their good? Are you praying for it? LOOKING for ways to be good to them?

This is the way of Christ. And what happens when you live this way? Peter says, **vs. 9, "You'll love life and see good days!"** You are like, "Good days now? Not possible. Covid/Race/this the election in November is going to be a dumpster fire." Yes, these are not great days in themselves, but Peter says there is a way to love life and see good days in the midst of bad ones. It's promised right there in the text! Trust like Jesus. Respond like Jesus. Live like Jesus, and you'll have the joy that Jesus lived with!

² Eusplagchnoi, the root of which refers to one's internal organs and is sometimes translated "bowels" or "intestines"

Stop here, look over that list, choose one, and voice a prayer to God asking him for help in it. Pray out loud!

2. Expect Suffering (vv. 9b–17)

vs. 9, in talking about experiencing hardship and suffering injustice, Peter says again, you were called for this...

- I've been over this every week, but suffering is an expected part of the Christian life. "You were called to this." There's a reason prosperity gospel preachers don't spend much time preaching from 1 Peter! Peter says suffering is the norm of the Christian life.
- Jen Wilkin says you can summarize 1 Peter this way: "We should be willing to suffer unjustly because Christ was willing to suffer unjustly to bring us to God."
- Now, Peter points to different kinds of suffering in these verses.
 - **First, he says, there's suffering because you did evil.** There's no real joy in that. Avoid that. **Think Jonah** in the Bible. He suffered in the belly of the fish because he ran from God.
 - Second, **you can suffer for doing right.** **Think Joseph in the Bible**--he was sold into slavery and put into prison for doing the right thing. **But God used his suffering to bring salvation to others.** Joseph said at the end of his life to the brothers that had enslaved him, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." This is Christ-like suffering and still happens today.
 - Third, sometimes God has us suffer for no perceivable reason (think Job). He changes you in it, but you --don't quite know what he's doing in the world through it. It's just a mystery.
 - 3 kinds of suffering, depicted in the 3 "Joe's" of the OT: Jonah: Suffering for doing what is wrong; Joseph: suffering for doing what is right; Job: suffering for no perceptible reason.
- Peter says, "In all of them, God is at work." And know that just because you're suffering doesn't mean you're going something wrong. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.
- It's just God's will sometimes for you to suffer. You can do everything good and still suffer. We need to get rid of this idea of a "smooth sailing God" who, when you please him, makes everything peachy keen for you. That's not what Jesus's life was like! He did everything right and suffered. And you are called to this, Peter says. We need to teach our kids to expect suffering in life. Otherwise we set them up for a crisis of faith--if you teach them that if they do their part everything will be smooth, then at some point something goes wrong in their lives--they get denied the job, they get taken advantage of, their marriage falls apart, death comes--and they feel like, "But I did everything right. God, what's wrong with you? Are you even there?" They need to understand in that moment, "I was called to this. And I can have the presence of Jesus in this moment and the promise that he's going to work it all out for good."

3. Turn Misery Into Ministry (vv. 15–16)

15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

- Peter says your suffering might be the best moment you have to point others to Jesus!
- Anyone can be happy when things are going well. But can you have joy when they aren't? **I was once watching a TV evangelist in my living room...** "I was filled with the Spirit and ready to drive down to FL where this guy was from and punch him in the throat."
- When you go through suffering with hope and unshakable joy, people will be curious, and they will ask you about it and you should be ready in that moment to give a defense of what you believe.
- And then, you should "be ready to give a defense" Pastor Bryan says there is a difference in giving a defense of our faith vs. being defensive about our faith. Most Christians are good being defensive about

their faith, but being ready to give a defense means first living a life that is so different that it evokes questions from others and then being prepared to answer those questions well.

- So let me ask you to consider both sides of that:
 - **When is the last time someone asked you the reason for your joy and hope in pain?** When is the last time someone asked you about why you are so generous? So forgiving? So patient? Be honest--one a scale of 1-10, how different SLASH amazing is your life in this regard? Don't say 10. That's for Jesus. OR 1. That's for the devil. Maybe you are the devil. So, 1-9 with 10 for Jesus, how different is your life?
 - BTW, this was the secret of the early church's success! They lived in ways that blew everyone's minds! Rodney Stark says there are several things about the early church that set them apart:
 - First, multi-ethnic unity
 - Radically generous. They took incredible care of the poor. We have that famous letter from Emperor Julian complaining "These godless Galileans care not only for their poor but ours as well."
 - Or how about this: Only in the church was there a regard for all life, especially those lives considered cheap by the Roman Empire. Rome had it's own abortion scheme: If a Roman family had a baby they didn't want, they would just leave it out by the trash overnight. There are ancient letters from Roman men to their wives, "If it is a boy, keep it. If it is a girl, discard it." That sound familiar? We may have found more sanitized ways of doing this, but the abortion industry in our country is essentially the same. You can discard kids you don't want. The early church practiced things called baby runs. Members would walk the streets at night listening for these discarded babies. Soon churches were filled with new babies, particularly baby girls, discarded on the streets.
 - These things made them ODD, and they provoked questions. When was the last time someone asked you about your generosity odd-ness? If they haven't, maybe that's because you're not that much different!
 - A couple years ago I read a book about the final days of the famous atheist Christopher Hitchens. During the last years of his life he toured around university campuses debating a Christian scholar named Larry Taunton. Larry wrote the book, and described how very few of his intellectual rebuttals made any deep impression on Christopher. But during his last months he said Christopher really began to question things, and it was mainly because of Taunton's decision to adopt a special needs girl from Russia with a lot of problems. Larry said he kept asking me, "Why?" That and he watched Larry's calmness in the face of death. There's no proof that Christopher became a believer before he died, but that kindness and that hope did something that intellectual argument could not.
 - Friend, this is effective evangelism. Effective evangelism doesn't come from mastering an evangelistic presentation: The bridge. The 4 spiritual laws. The evange-cube. It comes from living in a way that provokes a question.
- Which is the other side: Are you ready to share that when asked? If you want to grow in this, go to summitchurch.com/one. Also, we have some great training coming out for you this Fall...
- One more observation before we leave this. He says even in this, **16 Yet do this with gentleness and respect.** It doesn't matter how good your answer, or even how compelling your life, if you answer without gentleness and respect, you forfeit your witness. Screaming at someone in Jesus' name doesn't change them. No one ever gets converted through you saying mean, cutting things on Facebook or picketing a gay pride parade. GENTLENESS. RESPECT. That's supposed to describe our defense. Gentle. Gentle. Respect. Respect. You can do everything right—be a great defender of theology and adopt a kid, be a model Christian—but the minute you speak hatefully toward someone else, you undo all of that. It makes the rest of your life feel like a sham.

Before we go on to our last point, what if you stopped there and thought about where you are suffering, and God wants to use that as a testimony to others about your hope in Christ. And where can you show the generosity of Christ? And pray about that?

So, seek peace; expect suffering; turn misery into ministry. Lastly,

4. Stay on Message (vv. 18–22)

18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 in which he also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison 20 who in the past were disobedient, when God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. In it a few—that is, eight people—were saved through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not as the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

Oh my, some big questions in these verses! BTW, these verses in 1 Peter are regarded by many to be one of the most, if not *the* most, confusing in the NT! So I want to very quickly answer the two hardest questions here: 1. What in the heck does Peter mean that Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison and 2. What does he mean by ‘baptism saves you’?

- **Vs. 19** says that Christ, by the Spirit, also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison, **vs. 20** who in the past were disobedient, when God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. **That could mean one of two things:**
 - That after his death, Christ went and proclaimed his victory to a group of disobedient demons--principalities and powers--who had been at work in the days of Noah. They are bound up awaiting judgment, and Christ went and proclaimed to them his ultimate victory, a foretaste of what will happen at the final judgment.
 - The other option, and the one I prefer, is that Peter is saying that Christ through his Spirit was preaching *through* Noah during Noah’s disobedient generation, just as he is preaching now through us to ours. Noah preached for 120 years to his generation and no one listened, and Peter is saying, “Don’t be discouraged if sometimes we get the same reaction that Noah got. God eventually kept his word to Noah and brought salvation; we can be confident he will keep his word to us, too. By that reading, you’d read **vs. 19** this way: “In his Spirit, Christ (in the past) proclaimed the gospel through Noah to the spirits (the souls of people) who are now in prison (they are in hell, because they didn’t believe Noah’s message).” But don’t get discouraged--God eventually brought salvation in Noah’s day; he’ll bring salvation in ours, too.
- OK? The second confusing phrase is in vs. **21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you...**
 - Baptism saves you? I thought Scripture said, “Believe on the LJC and you will be saved”? And “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and... For with heart man believes unto righteousness...” Peter is not contradicting that and saying getting baptized is actually what saves you. It’s just that baptism was closely associated with salvation--we say it is like the ring ceremony in a marriage that you can easily conflate the two. If I say that 20 years ago Veronica and I exchanged rings and were married, I don’t mean that the exchange of rings alone makes us married, I’m just speaking in shorthand. That’s what Peter is doing here. He makes clear, in fact, that he’s not saying the water of baptism going over you saves you, but the response of faith expressed through it. See vs. 21? He says I’m not talking about *(not as the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience (the request for forgiveness of sins) toward God)*, which you are declaring in baptism.

So, that's your answer. You can all explain one of the most confusing passages of Scripture, and you're all now certified Bible nerds. But in those technicalities, don't lose Peter's main point in this section. Here it is. **CHRIST WINS**. Just like he won in the days of Noah when everyone thought Noah was a fool. And so he will today. He wins!

And so, Peter says, Don't get off message. There's one winner to this whole thing--Christ. Keep preaching him. Even when it feels like no one is listening. Even when it feels like the world is coming unraveled and falling apart. Keep preaching, because just like he brought salvation through Noah, so he is going to bring it through you, too.

Summit: The gospel is first and always will be. It's the one message, the one mission, the one agenda guaranteed to succeed. I don't know where everything is going in our world. I don't know where society is going. But I know where Jesus is going. So, sure, let's talk about politics. But here's our main talking point: Both Democrats and Republicans need Jesus, and the ultimate salvation we are looking for didn't come riding in on the wings of Air Force One, but cradled in a manger. Whether you belong to the donkey or the elephant is not as important as whether you belong to the Lamb. And yes, let's talk about the economy. But our main message is that both the rich and the poor need Jesus. And yes, let's talk about race. And our main message is that people of every race need Jesus, and Jesus came to make one equal family of brothers and sisters out of all of us. And let's talk about COVID--but let's make clear that whether we take a vaccine or not, we're all going to die, and we all need Jesus.

These subjects matter, but Jesus matters most of all. So we're going to stay on message. This is the shade in the hot sun of a chaotic world. This is how to love life and see good days.

Let's declare that victory through song!

JESUS AT THE CENTER