

11-05-23 Shadows: Lessons from Suffering 1

1 Peter 3:8-22.

The theme over the last 3 weeks has been how will we respond when we are hit with suffering. How are we to be towards each other and the world while dealing with suffering all around us. Just a reminder, Peter was writing **1 Peter** to Christians as they were in the middle of persecution.

One of the things we need to understand in life is that we need each other. When things are going bad around us, it is easy to start turning to the ones we say we love; it is easy to turn on our family. During times of difficulty, we need one another even more. The tough time of life is not the time (there is never a time) to turn on our family or our Christian family.

In any family, there are times when we say things and do things to one another that are wrong, insensitive, and dumb. In your blood family, what do you do when another family member treats you in an evil way? I hope we try to work through it and not just hate the person forever.

One of the things that marks a person as a Christian is by the love we have for other Christians.

John 13:35, By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

It is one thing to say we love one another; it is a different thing to love one another!

It is imperative that as Christians, we love one another, and I am not only talking about those who are within these walls, we also need to love our brothers and sisters who belong to other churches also.

The world needs to see that we really love one another. Our love for one another must be real. It cannot be just a show.

Today we are going to ask the question, "Do We Love Our Christian family?" We will look at how love will show itself in our lives and in our interactions with others.

Read 1 Peter 3:8-12.

Our love will show by:

I. The Attitudes WE Display.

- Attitude is a good indicator of the true heart within us. If we really love one another, it will be evident in the following attitudes.
- 1. An attitude of UNITY.**
 - Do we display an attitude of unity, a spirit of harmony?
 - Unity is our power; it is the X factor. Satan messes with the unity of things, it is where he attacks.
 - Why does Satan always attack/mess with unity? Because we are better together and if he can divide us, he can win at messing with us.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph. 4:1-5

- What does "endeavoring" mean? (Attempt by effort, strive, to work with purpose, to exert oneself) We must put in effort, work with purpose to keep the unity of the bond of peace.

- **1 Peter 3:8 “...be of one mind...”** We are like-minded; we realize we are part of a team. That team includes brothers in Christ from other churches who have been obedient to the call of Christ.
- Being harmonious means that we are working together for a common goal of spread the gospel.
- Cecil, you don’t understand, there is NO WAY I can be harmonious, unified with that jack wagon over there! (Are you telling Jesus it can’t be done? That His prayers are ineffective?)

John 17:21-23, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ESV

- The early church experienced unity. They were working for a common goal and God was blessing them for it (**Acts 2:42-47**).

Unity does not mean uniformity; it means cooperation in the midst of diversity. The members of the body work together in unity, even though they are all different. Christians may differ on how things are to be done, but they must agree on what is to be done and why. -Wiersbe

The second attitude we will display if we love our brother is:

2. A Compassionate Heart.

- This attitude should be shown to saved and lost, but in this context, it tells us we are to be sympathetic to our brother.
- This means getting involved in the other person’s life instead of being aloof or indifferent about them and their situation.
- A sympathetic person can enter another person’s feelings and show regard and concern for them and their welfare. You can walk in their shoes and feel their pain.

Hebrews 4:15, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ESV

A third attitude we are to display is:

3. Brotherly Love.

- This is a special love we are to have for one another that is like the love we have for a family member. We give family a lot of latitude as we deal with them, we should do the same for the family of God!

4. Be Tenderhearted.

- This is the ability to be compassionate. It involves the ability to show pity to another person. We are sensitive to the burdens that others are bearing.
- Not only are we easily touched, but a kindhearted person will be moved to action. They will be driven to help fix the suffering that comes from the depth of the soul.

5. Be Courteous.

- Be a master at humility.
- This is an inner attitude of voluntary submission to authority. It leads to an honest view of oneself when we are submitting to God.

Love will show itself by:

Attitude WE Display.

II. The Actions WE Pursue.

1. Control OUR Speech.

- Read verses 9-10 again.
- Verse 10 tells us we must keep our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking deceit. Verse 9 says we are not to exchange insult for insult.
- Deceit means to say something to try to mislead someone; it is saying one thing and meaning another.
- The tongue can do a lot of damage to people.

James 3:5-8, So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ESV

James 1:26, You might think you are a very religious person. But if your tongue is out of control, you are fooling yourself. Your careless talk makes your offerings to God worthless. ERV

2. Pursue God's Ways.

- We are told in verse 9 not to return evil for evil, insult for insult.
- There are at three levels of living we can practice.
- We can give evil for good. This is a satanic path.
- We can give good for good or evil for evil. This is the worldly path.
- We can give good for evil. This is the divine path.
- We are not only called not to retaliate, but we are to give the person a blessing. We are to be a blessing to the person who is committing evil against us. We are called to actively do appropriate deeds to minister to them.
- Peter tells us we were called to do this from the day of our conversion.

3. Seek and Pursue Peace.

- Verse 11 tells us that as we turn away from evil, we are to seek and pursue peace.
- Seeking and pursuing pictures of a person diligently looking for buried treasure.
- Pursuing denotes a great effort exerted. It is to be an intense pursuit.
- The spoken of here is most likely with our brother, but it can include peace with God or an inner spirit of peace.

- Effective peacemakers seek and pursue peace. It does not happen by accident.

The third way love will show itself by:

III. The Blessings WE Enjoy.

- **Verse 9** tells us we have been called to do what we are asked to do so that we might inherit a blessing! **Verses 10-12** which start with “**For**” explain what blessings we can receive as we love one another.

Here are four of them listed in the text.

1. You will have a life you can love.

- Your life will have meaning and purpose. You will have a life that is delightful. God can and will make sure your life is sweet and enjoyable!

2. You will enjoy good days.

- This involves an inner quality of spiritual triumph. This reminds us that God is in control of the day, even the days of persecution. These days can be good when we know that we can win the spiritual battles. It will be a good day when we know we have put a smile on the face of our God for standing strong with Him!

3. You will enjoy being obedient to God.

- **Verse 12** tells us that God’s eyes are on the righteous.
- Since we are saved and we are living for Him, God’s approval will shine down upon us! On the negative side, God’s face is turned away from those who do evil.
- We are called to live an upright Spirit lead life!

4. Your prayers will be heard.

- The picture to see is one of God bending down to better hear the prayers of His children.
- This is a true blessing to possess, and it is one of the reasons the Christian can have a life that they love!

Conclusion

God calls us to love one another. Sometimes that can be difficult, but we must remember that we need each other as we strive to live our lives for Jesus!

When we fail to love one another, it is a poor witness to the lost world, it hurts those whom we will not love, and it will hurt us in the way of withheld blessings from God.

We must remember that ALL Christians are family, and we need to make sure we act that way.

We must not only talk the talk, but we must walk the walk!