

5-17-20

Sermon- "R" You Ready?

Scripture- 1 Peter 3:13-22, CTW: Psalm 66:8-20

Hymn- #436

Theme- Here Peter lays out some expectations for the day to day lives of God's people. We must be zealous for good. What does that mean in practical terms? We also must always be ready to give the reason for the hope that we have...to know it and be able to defend it. Today we go deeper into the idea of being ready in all circumstances.

**Introduction:** Needless to say, none of us knows how many years we have left, but as Christians, we do have the blessed assurance of hereafter, based on our sure hope made secure by the resurrection of Jesus.

Although things may not be going well in the present, due to unwanted situations or circumstances, each of us as is able to say assuredly: "It is well with my soul; therefore, I am at peace with God".

Keep in mind that, whether what we are going through is due to our humanity or our Christianity, our journey on this earth is temporary.

We are pilgrims making progress toward our heavenly abode - the place Jesus promised to prepare for us.

The apostle Peter most likely had the believer's ultimate goal in mind when he strongly encouraged the persecuted church of the 1st century to endure suffering for the Lord's sake, remembering how Christ endured for our sakes.

**II. In our scripture today, a very thought-provoking question is put to believers: "Who will harm you if you are deeply committed to what is good?"**

This is not a "shrug of the shoulders" question as if he were making light of painful experiences that some Christians go through. Rather, it seems to me, his thinking was more in line

with that of Isaiah, who also wrestled with the issue of suffering, yet Isaiah “**rested** his case” on the goodness of God:

**Isaiah 50:9** states “It is the sovereign Lord who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment.” The simple message here is that God’s Goodness will prevail!

In this passage, **I Peter 3:13-22**, Peter urges fellow believers to spend their remaining days committed to what is good in spite of suffering.

In my study of this section, I found a lot of key words that begin with the letter “R” which Peter sees as key words to live by which I will emphasize as I get to them. Remember, that Peter’s focus here is the conduct of a Christian once they have committed their lives to Christ.

**A. The first “R” is Right. Much like your parents would urge you, Peter says that we must focus on doing RIGHT.**

We are expected to do **RIGHT (righteous and “right relationship”** are words that come to mind) in God’s sight with **regard** to our manner of living and in relationships to others. At our age and stage in life, considering our situations and circumstances, I’d say that “One for all and all for one” is a pretty good mentality for us to hold on to.

To keep us focused on achieving that goal, Peter gives us ways to achieve it. He says that we must live in harmony, and a way to achieve that is to be sympathetic toward one another.

Also, we must always be **ready** to show our love for God and His kingdom by being compassionate, forgiving, and have a spirit of humility - marks of the Christian life as taught and practiced by the Lord Jesus!

Suffice it to say, in order to achieve the first “R”, just focusing on being on good terms with God, is not enough...along with the vertical **relationship** with God, we must maintain a Godly horizontal **relationship** with one another...whether they are God’s people or not.

**B. With another “R”, Peter calls us all to reverence!** To **reverence** the Lord in our hearts is to live out your state of blessedness.

In this sense that you live out your days genuinely happy which, in a spiritual context, has little or nothing to do with material things or physical well-being.

It does have everything to do with the inner peace we have because we know for certain that God looks with favor upon those who **repent** of their sins and commit their lives to Christ as Savior and Lord. This we have done; this we will continue to do daily.

In the short term, what’s happening now in the world may bewilder us; and for the life of us, we cannot see how God is going to be glorified by it all.

After all, a Christian may run into “suffering” simply and solely for **righteousness’** sake, due to the fact that the way of the Christian and the way of the world are incompatible.

However, in the context of eternity, Peter tells us that a holy and just God will make things right. Goodness will be **rewarded** and evil punished. Don’t give up on the Lord God! And let no one lead you astray!

Until things in the world get straighten out the way they are supposed to, **reject fear** as a way of life, and **rely** on God’s grace to strengthen you in and through it all. Put yourself in God’s hands. Leave the outcome up to Him.

Spend the remaining days of your lives in **reverential** awe of the Lord, meditating on all He has done . . . is doing . . . will do! To God be the glory!

To “**reverence** the Lord” is to be so blessed that there’s a longing in our hearts to see others blessed.

To “**reverence** the Lord” is to **respect** other people - as individuals who are loved . . . for whom Christ died . . . who are in need of a blessing . . . to whom we witness by speaking and acting graciously, but wisely.

When personally confronted by insinuations or accusations, the gentler our **response**, the better; but not at the expense of stopping our benevolence, **or** remaining silent, **or** diluting the truth, **or** twisting Scripture in order to avoid disagreement, **or**, just to go along in order to get along.

Remember: Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin and, after speaking the truth in love, brought their defense of preaching to a close with that famous line - "for we cannot help but tell what we have seen and heard" - and what we have felt in our hearts, and therefore must do!

**C. With another "R", Peter says we are to spend our Remaining days aware of the reason for our faith in Christ.**

A distinguishing mark of Christians in the 1st century was **hope** – Write these references down and look them up: I Peter 1:3-4, I Peter 1:21, Romans 4:18-20, Titus 2:11-14. These all point to the real reason for a **very real hope** which all Christians must cling to: Jesus and His atoning work on the cross!

Why should it be any different for Christians in this the 21st century? Remember the song: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and **righteousness**"...

It's no more unusual for us today than it was back then for someone to ask why we are Christian, why we believe the Gospel, why we hold firm to our convictions even though we suffer humiliation and **ridicule**.

If a non-Christian or "casual" Christian demeans you because of your firm Christian position . . . dismisses your Christian convictions as being "out-of-date" . . . blames past sins for present suffering, how do you handle it?

After all, it is not whether or not we face challenges in our lives as much as how we handle them when they arise. "With gentleness and **respect**" is the right way!

What do you suppose Peter meant by "keeping your conscience clear"? Wouldn't it have to do with the way we tend to react on the personal level when faced with unjust implications, accusations or actions?

For example, when we resort to verbal **retaliation**, doesn't it bring us down to the level of those who despise us? **Remember** Proverbs 15? "A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath."

What might be a gentle answer to someone who asks you why you are a Christian . . . the **reason** for your hope of eternal life . . . why you trust in God when there is so much evil in the world and bad things happen to good people?

#### **D. Finally Peter addresses our Resolve to finish on a high note. Take the high Road...**

Finishing on a high note means, to me, that the power of sin no longer has control over me . . . being God's child and doing my Father's will is my number one priority.

Praying is more heartfelt than ever . . . praising God has taken on greater significance . . . preparation for meeting the Lord face to face is about done . . . active patience has become my routine!

Let us finish the thought by taking a cue from David whose thoughts about the coming of the Lord led him to resolve to "**rest** in the Lord and wait patiently for Him"!

Psalm 37 is your homework assignment...and really good advice for us all!

Psalm 37:1-7, 39-40

#### **A psalm of David.**

- 1 Don't worry about the wicked  
or envy those who do wrong.
- 2 For like grass, they soon fade away.  
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.
- 3 Trust in the LORD and do good.  
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
- 4 Take delight in the LORD,  
and he will give you your heart's desires.
- 5 Commit everything you do to the LORD.  
Trust him, and he will help you.

<sup>6</sup> He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,  
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

<sup>7</sup> Be still in the presence of the LORD,  
and wait patiently for him to act.  
Don't worry about evil people who prosper  
or fret about their wicked schemes.

<sup>39</sup> The LORD **rescues** the godly;  
he is their fortress in times of trouble.

<sup>40</sup> The LORD helps them,  
rescuing them from the wicked.  
He saves them,  
and they find shelter in him.

Amen? Let us **Revere** God in Prayer..