

Series: Different

Sermon #7

Loving Life in Difficult Times

1 Peter 3:8-12

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- October 24, 2021

“Different” Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWtjfweiKks>

If you can hear this message, listen closely: To the exiled, misunderstood, or upside-down, this is your message of hope. When problems come, use them. When enemies persecute you, love them. These struggles are a fire refining you into gold. Look around. You are not forgotten. You are not alone. Challenge what is expected of you. This world is not your home. You are different.

Well, good morning, Grace! Today, if you listened carefully to that video, it is a message from eternity. It is from the pen of Peter; it is from the mind of God. It is about how to live a good life in bad times. And that’s what we’re going to look at today.

Does anybody want to live a good life? Yeah. In bad times? You bet.

And in the context of that letter, let me read this. It’s a pretty long quote. Forgive me if I mess this up. It’s from a commentary that I enjoyed about the context of Peter, and let’s see if we can maybe relate to what’s going on.

“When the Apostle Peter wrote his first recorded letter, times were troubling. Political upheaval; moral digression; philosophical and religious confusion; governmental corruption; rising taxes and economic burdens and the lowering of the value of human life; the government media were convincing the populous of lies concerning Christians ... and for Christians, the clouds of persecution were gathering.

“Christians were misunderstood, mistreated, maligned, rejected even by family members, singled out by employers ... some were even beginning to experience imprisonment and abuse and even death.

“In addition to that, they were living under the reign of an emperor who was growing increasingly insane.”

I don't know. It's got everything but ships in Long Beach. So, we can relate to 1 Peter. And that's why--is it any wonder that in the year 2020 we did the Year of the Bible, and now in 2021 we are looking at the writings of Peter? Let's look at the life of Peter.

And so, we started that off at the beginning of the year by looking at 1 Peter chapters 1 and 2 where he said this: Who you are determines what you do. And he's saying that this is what God says about who you are: **“My dearest friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles ...”** Your home is not here. You're just foreigners and exiles. And he says, *I want you to be people of consequence, always on call to hear God's voice and care for a people in a time of a hostile world.*

We did that in the fall. And in the summertime, because things lighten up, we spent some time looking at the biography of Peter. Let's look at his journey from fearful to courageous and see if we might learn something from that. So, we looked at the life of Peter in the summertime.

Now we're looking at 1 Peter chapters 3 through 5 where he's going to start applying the doctrine that we knew before in chapters 1 and 2, that we're foreigners and exiles and that our home is in heaven. And he wants us to use and live out these strong convictions ... these strong convictions in our souls as the culture becomes more and more hostile, as Christians are being mocked, and they are being lied about, as it might cost us everything. Peter is saying, *Let's look at what these convictions lead to.*

If you're thinking, *What is the difference between a belief and a conviction--* persecution will tell you that. Persecution will flush out your beliefs like a quail hunt. There they go --- there go your beliefs. And what you have left over are your convictions. Those are the things that stay. And Peter wants us to have these convictions: that you are foreigners, strangers. Your home is in heaven and you're living for that.

And then, when he starts applying those truths, we found out earlier, as we left off in the fall, it said, *Therefore, submit to the government, even when it's corrupt. Submit and surrender to the needs of your employer. Make him famous, even though he's not fair.*

And then he has six verses on marriage. And instead of doing the six verses on marriage, we spent seven weeks on marriage. That's why we did the "5 Words" series. We're just keeping up with Peter.

Now he's going to go into broader applications kind of having to do with our mindset as to how to live our lives in the context of the culture that we live in. How to be happy in a sad time ... Do you want a happy life? Maybe not. Do you want a happy life? Well, sure you do. And it's in bad times. So, he's going to give us two main points about how to have a happy life.

The first one is, he's going to say, "Play nice." Play nice inside the Church, play nice outside the Church. That's what he means. What does it mean to play nice? Inside the Church: he's going to give us five uncommon virtues. And then outside the Church he's going to give us an uncommon reaction.

I. Play Nice

So, here we are—play nice inside the Church. This is how you live a happy life in sad times.

A. Five Uncommon Virtues

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Five uncommon virtues—let's look at what it says in 1 Peter 3, verse 8: "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart"—that means compassionate—"and a humble mind." So, he says "finally" here—some of your translations will say, "To sum it up ...". And what he means is that he just wants to give a summary of what he's been talking about so far. In our vocabulary here at Grace, it's when we say that you need to start turning out. In difficult times it's very difficult to turn in and become selfish. He said, *No, no, no. While that's instinctive in a sinful person, you are in the image of Jesus Christ.*

And it starts with this: **unity of mind**. A great translation for that phrase is “to live in harmony with one another.” Live in harmony. The Church is sometimes compared to the body. When the body is living in harmony that means everything is working together, right? Different parts, but everything is functional. And when you have one body part that’s in disharmony the whole body suffers for that.

Right now, I’ve got a right ear that’s gone absolutely rogue. The hearing part of my right ear wants to convince my brain that I’m at the beach during a hurricane. The balance part of my ear wants me to think I’m on those little spinning teacups at Disneyland. And the rest of my body can’t live with this. Because one part of my body is out of harmony—he’s saying, *Look, everybody has to do this.*

It’s interesting—you don’t have the responsibility to **produce** harmony. That’s the Holy Spirit’s work. Our job is to **protect** harmony and to protect unity.

Another metaphor is harmony in music. Harmony and unity do not mean uniformity. In contrast, it’s several different types of instruments. In many ways they’re playing different notes, and the fact that they’re being harmonious makes it beautiful—different instruments playing different notes, they have one conductor, they have one set of music that it is their goal to play. And that’s how the Church works. So many different ethnic groups, socioeconomic categories, gifts, abilities, backgrounds, preferences, political views---yeah, what do you guys have in common? Anything? One thing. Yeah—Jesus Christ is our Savior. He’s our King. And His Father is our conductor. And we play the music that He tells us to play.

In the way that He designed us, He’s our conductor. That’s what it means, in the culture back then and in our culture like today when people are self-serving, self-gratifying, self-exalting, self-promoting, turning in, “It’s all about me.” The Church in unity stood out, as it would today. It stands aside, unified.

The second virtue here is **sympathy**. Sympathy is when we enter in to someone else’s emotions, whether it’s joy or sorrow. And it’s beautiful. You can see in the life of Jesus, especially in the Book of John, that He actually does this in His miracles. The first miracle Jesus has in the Book of John is that He’s at a wedding. And it’s an event of joy and He wants to make it more joyous, and so He turns the water into wine.

In the last miracle in the Book of John, He's at a funeral, and He enters the sorrow and the grief of these people. He's part of that. Jesus weeps and does something about it that we can't and causes that miracle to happen.

When Paul wrote with the same things in mind, he said, "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." He's saying that's what it looks like to play nice inside the Church, is to have empathy.

Here's why this is important. Because when hard times come upon us, it is simple and natural—it's sliding down a slippery hill—to just go and get hard. When the culture gets hard, we get hard. And he's saying, *No, don't do that. You're having trouble, "I'm in sorrow, I want to make this about me"*—he's saying, *No, turn out. You can turn out by doing this. You could ask for help or you could enter someone else's sorrow and say, "Wow, we have more in common than I thought. I've lost a wife as well."* He's saying, *Do that.* Play nice.

Unity, sympathy—and then he talks about **brotherly love**. The word for love here in Greek is *phileo*. And that word is where we get the name of the city of Philadelphia. Philadelphia literally translates as "the city of brotherly love." And if you want to know what brotherly love looks like, take a flight, go to Philadelphia, see how they treat you, and then do just the opposite of that, and that's what brotherly love looks like. You can just go to the airport on a connecting flight. You'll get it.

Here's what it means. Hey, you're family! Brotherly love means what we say at our house sometimes: "Same team. Why are we arguing, why are we fighting like we're enemies? Same team." Brotherly love.

You want to live a happy life during sad times? Yeah, you do. You need a **tender heart**. The fourth attribute is a tender heart. It is translated sometimes into the literal translation of "compassion." And compassion is an interesting word. Peter saw this watching Jesus for three years.

A pastor named Idleman pointed this out in his study of the word "compassion." When he looked at the gospels, he saw that compassion, the emotion, the feeling, was almost always attached to an action; that Jesus felt compassion and then did something about it. So, in Mark chapter 6 He felt compassion and then He fed the people who were hungry. In Matthew chapter 9 He felt compassion, and so then He prayed for those people. In Matthew chapter 20 He felt compassion and healed two blind men. And then later on in Mark chapter 1 He had compassion

and healed the lepers. In other words, compassion is more than just feelings or emotion. Jesus turns compassion into a verb. He says, *Do something about the heartfelt feelings that you have that maybe God has brought to you.* Do something.

In the life of Jesus, maybe whatever the heart of Jesus felt, His hand touched. So, the opposite of compassion is indifference—don't even care. See, that's the very reason that here at Grace we started kind of a campaign. When we were coming out of the isolation part of the pandemic, quarantine, we were turning towards indifference. It's so simple to be indifferent. The quarantine lasted so long—at least I did this, and you might have done this. You slip into safety and protection for me and mine. You just kind of turn in. *As long as we're safe, that's good.* And it was so long, you get into a habit of that. Anything over forty days becomes a habit. It was a lot longer than forty days! And so, we find ourselves sliding, slipping, becoming indifferent. So, we just thought, *You know what? Let's get back in shape as a church. Let's do a summer of giving and a fall of serving. Let's do that together and have fun doing it.*

And I just want you to know that the results are beyond astonishing. I want to tell you about it. The summer of giving and the consequences of that—I'm going to roll this out for the next three or four weeks, because I can't do it all at once. I'm going to just tell you—the Summer of Giving was anything that the congregation gave that was above our budget expenses, and we gave it away to communities and ministries around Austin and around the world.

So, we got started, and, I don't know, a couple of months into the process, we gave away \$232,000. Ka-ching! [applause] Yeah. So, we gave that to The Source, which is a women's health organization that we love. We gave it to Community First Village—we bought two homes there that help people who want to get out of chronic homelessness. And we also gave to Baptist Haiti Mission because of the earthquakes that took place, and we needed to give to somebody we could trust with boots on the ground.

But wait—there's more. We just kind of finished closing out our September books so that we could find out how much money we had to spend. And there's another \$305,000 that we're going to give away. We're going to give away in excess of a half million dollars from a Summer of Giving, okay? Yeah, this is so much fun.

So, where are our targets of compassion where we could come in and maybe do something? Where could we be maybe slipping towards indifference? So, this week I want to focus on the people that are suffering abject poverty and even homelessness—the poor and the

homeless. And so, I'm going to tell you as the weeks progress other organizations that we're giving to. But this time I want to let you know that we gave \$10,000 to Mission Possible. That's a ministry that we've been involved with for, I think, over twenty-five or thirty years, helping the people in East Austin. And Church Under the Bridge is a ministry that they have there for homeless people.

Another one is the Mosaic Church street ministry. Mosaic Church is right up the street here at Highway 183, and they have a wonderful ministry. Actually, the lady who runs that used to be in our youth group—that's kind of a fun overlap. And they're going up and down Highway 183 helping those people, giving them dignity. And also, getting them ready, those who want to get well, for long-term housing. We gave that ministry \$10,000. What long-term housing do they point the people to? Here we go again—Community First. So, we gave \$100,000 to Community First, that fabulous ministry that's part of Mobile Loaves and Fishes, and we might be—I don't know how we're going to spend it exactly—buying another two houses. We're just playing Monopoly now. We've got two houses on Baltic Avenue and Mediterranean and here we go.

I'm going to tell you more each week because there's still more money to tell you about.

But anyway, we've already done this, but just give everybody a hand for our generosity here at Grace. When we're generous, we can change a community, okay? This church has been blessed, and so we get to bless our community around us. And what happens is that even a hostile culture doesn't know what to do with generosity towards people where there's nothing in it for us.

1 Peter 2:11-12

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles ... ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

That's why Peter says in chapter 2 when he's talking about doctrine, "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles ..."—you're not from here—"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of His visitation."

Yeah. You want to live a good life in bad times? Yeah. So, play nice with family. Unity, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion. And this last one is a **humble mind**.

I love what it says about a humble mind. Pastor Swindoll points out that the humility is in a place that only God can see. It's your thoughts, it's a humble spirit, not just in pretense or in action, but it's in the very way you think. You want to test on whether or not you have the attitude of a servant? How do you act when somebody actually treats you like a servant? If it's all right, then you're right there.

What's interesting again, just to remind you, is that humility, when Peter writes this, is not a virtue in that culture. It's a vice. It wasn't exalted. These are Romans. They're Klingons. They exalt things like courage and aggression and bravado. And you made fun of someone for being humble.

Here's a little fun fact I tripped on when I was studying this, a phrase that we all know. In the seventeenth century when wealthy landowners would go on hunting expeditions, they packed everything. They packed everything! They brought in fully-staffed kitchens and all the equipment. They had changing tents. They brought their libraries just in case. If you can imagine, it's like *The Four Seasons* goes camping. Think of *Downton Abbey* if you saw some of that. That's much more modern, but you get the idea.

But here's what happened. After the big hunt it turned into the giant feast out there in the wilderness. And the people got to enjoy the meat from the deer that they had just killed. But the help that did all the work? No. They didn't get any of the venison, none of the meat. All they could have were the leftovers—the innards. The innards were called “umbles.” And so, what they did is clean up the innards and they would mix it up with vegetables and fruit and then they would wrap it up in dough and bake it in the oven, and it would become “umble pie.” And then later it became “humble pie.” And humble pie is used exclusively for people who have done something that took them down a couple of notches. No one wants to eat humble pie. It's what you get for being cocky. And Peter is saying this: the dinner bell has rung, my brothers and sisters. Come on down and pull up your chairs. Learn to like humble pie, because it's good for your soul. Do that.

To be clear, his humble pie doesn't lead to mousy, fearful anxiety. On the contrary, it's this strong and courageous humility. It is fearless. It is a different kind of humility.

The application is this. When difficult times come upon us, those circumstances, particularly persecution, separate our beliefs from real convictions. And hard times will do that. And Peter here is saying for the Church to be the Church, to make any kind of difference and to glorify God, we have to be unified and sympathetic and compassionate and love one another and be humble. And the hardship shows that in us, whether it can strengthen it or show our weakness.

The brand of Christianity that fails to make us more tender hearted and kind is not New Testament Christianity.

---J. Allen Blair

I love this quote from Blair. He says, “The brand of Christianity that fails to make us more tender hearted and kind is not New Testament Christianity.”

I’m going to say that again. “The brand of Christianity that fails to make us more tender hearted and kind is not New Testament Christianity.”

And I’ll just say this. If you’ve been coming to Grace for a while and getting involved in the various ministries and it has not made you more tender hearted and kind, protecting unity, these attributes, these virtues, we’re doing something wrong. If our teaching puffs you up, we’re doing something wrong. It’s supposed to make you like Christ in all of life, a humble and courageous soldier for Him.

1 Peter 3:9

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

You want to live a life of joy during times of sorrow? There you go. You play nice inside the Church. And then he says that you play nice outside the Church. He has this very uncommon reaction to persecution. Look what he says about the Christians reaction to persecution. “Do not repay evil for evil, reviling for reviling, but on the contrary”—ooh, that hurts—“bless, for this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.”

So, Peter is saying this: Do not repay a Facebook comment for a Facebook comment, right? A tweet for a tweet, a sarcastic remark for a sarcastic remark. If you're wondering what that looks like, I brought to you a picture that could help you.



Try to remember this. Even the frogs know how to do this. Look ... the Holy Spirit ... yep ... don't have to say everything. Right? There's so much truth to that picture.

So, the point is this. It's not enough to play nice inside the Church where we're all getting along and singing "Kum Ba Yah," where we go and we light up some city council meeting and not practice that, or just kind of be annoyed by some neighbor because he has a silly yard sign. No, genuine love is loving all people, not just the ones that don't love you back. It means showing respect for all people, especially the ones that don't you show you any respect.

1 Peter 3:9

For you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

How in the world are you supposed to do that? And why are you supposed to do that? Well, it says in verse 9: “For you are called for this very purpose, that you might inherit blessing.” You are called for this—this is what you’re called for. You’re on call, remember? You’re on call, ready to act!

And then he says that it’s because you’re to inherit an eternal blessing. You’ve got a blessing coming to you. You’re going to have more left over to give out to everyone else.

I love the way he’s kind of playing with some math here. He says you’re going to be blessed to bless others. And then he says, *Bless others because you’re going to inherit a blessing.* See? We’re blessed to bless others; we bless others because we’re going to inherit a blessing. A lot of blessing from the Church.

It’s interesting how Peter now is going to summarize these first two verses, verses 8 and 9, by referring his audience to a psalm that I’m sure they knew. It’s Psalm 34 and it’s written by David.

1 Peter 3:10

For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.”

While he was being persecuted by Saul, he was completely innocent and people are lying about his allegiance and he’s being hunted down to be killed. And this is what David says: “Whoever desires to love life and see good days”—there’s the title of our sermon—anybody here want to love life and see good days? Well, sure you do. What do you have to do? It starts right here. “... let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.” Remember this guy? Yeah, that’s what he’s talking about. It starts with keeping your tongue from evil and your lips from deceit. And the rest is self-evident.

1 Peter 3:11-12

**“Let him turn away from evil and do good;
Let him seek peace and pursue it.
¹² For 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 evil.”**

“Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For 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 evil.”

Want to have a happy life in sad times? You want to have a good life in bad days? He says, *Play nice. Play nice inside the Church; play nice outside the Church.* There’s our two points.

II. Persecution into Preaching

And our second point is this: turn your persecution into preaching. And I wish I were a preacher, because I would like this section ... oh, I would love to do that. Because he’s not really explaining so much as he’s reminding and motivating his audience. It’s like he’s just getting people fired up. They know to do this. He’s just trying to preach at this point. Let me just read it.

1 Peter 3:13-15

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,” ¹⁵ But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

He says, “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” But let’s just say, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.” There’s “blessed” again. So, here’s this courageous part. “ ‘Have no fear of them, nor be troubled’”—in your humility, you’ve got humble courage there—“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,

always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet”—remember—“do it with gentleness and respect.”

Courageous, humility, gentleness, respect—all this time we’re learning how to live a great life in terrible times. Here’s what it looks like preaching. I’d love some feedback. Turn your persecution into preaching, everybody. Say amen.

How about turn your misery into ministry?

[Congregation]: Amen.

Accusations into acclamations?

[Congregation]: Amen.

How about turning your oppressions into opportunities?

[Congregation]: Amen.

Yeah, how about your situations into a soapbox to talk about Jesus?

[Congregation]: Amen.

How about when they alienate you, you say, “Yeah, I’m feeling pretty good because I already am an alien.” Mercy, right? Let’s go!

1 Peter 3:16-17

**“ ... having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.
17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.**

And then he goes on: “...having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that’s what God’s will is for you--it’s better that than doing evil. “

So, here’s what it looks like. When a collective group of people—let’s just call them the Church—decide to live out their convictions--that they’re not from here, they’re just passing through, their home is in heaven, they have the dignity and the honor of Jesus Christ himself—when they decide to play nice inside the Church and outside the Church, and when they look for opportunities to tell people about Christ, when they look at persecution as a way of being proclaimers of the Gospel, when they turn out and look for life as good works in Jesus Christ that

He's arranged before the beginning of time that we present ourselves in; that group of people called the Church—that changes the culture. It radically changed the Roman culture. That's how they changed things.

I just want to acknowledge that it has been a very difficult two years. I want to say that I think it might get worse. And when times get hard, it's easy for us to become hard. And Peter's saying, *No, no, no. Don't do that.*

And so, look ... the next time you're just pulling up to a dinner party or you're walking down some hallway for a corporate meeting, or you're setting up tables for a neighborhood event, go there and play nice, no matter what. Go there and say, *I'm going to be a blessing to this event, because I've been blessed, and I will inherit a blessing. And I'm going to be the one that gives blessing all around. If anybody persecutes, I'm going to turn that into an opportunity to preach. The situation I'm going to be in is a soapbox.*

Convictions are what's left after beliefs are kind of burned up. And sometimes it just takes hurt feelings or inconveniences. And sometimes it's cultural pressure; sometimes it's real persecution. And Peter is saying that the first century church had these convictions: they weren't going to be here long, and they wanted to make an impact, an impact that would ripple and echo into eternity. They were not from here. They wanted to receive the eternal blessing that they were promised. And so, they did this: they played nice, inside the Church, outside the Church. They blessed inside the Church, outside the Church.

Peter's showing us that these aren't hard times; these are great opportunities. And so, I appeal to you at Grace, let's be a church like that. What do you say? Amen, and that's how you live a joy-filled life in a sorrow-filled world. Everybody wins.

Let's pray.

Lord, we are inspired by these words of Peter; oh, the one who denied you not once, but thrice, is now telling us how to stand strong and courageous. He wants us to live a life without regret; he wants us to live a life that's humble and yet courageous. He's showing us the way. Lord, I'd ask that we would follow that way, that we'd be encouraged—en-couraged—that we would look for opportunities to protect the unity of this church, that we would find out ways to serve and have compassion for those in the Church and outside the Church; that we would be looking for good works that we're to do in Jesus Christ that You have rolled out before us in

such a time as this. Let us be Daniels and Davids and Josephs that went above circumstances and used those as platforms to express and proclaim the glory of Yahweh--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.